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Transforming antidialogic actions that silence bilingual parents in schools

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TRANSFORMING ANTIDIALOGIC ACTIONS THAT SILENCE BILINGUAL PARENTS IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

TRANSFORMING ANTIDIALOGIC ACTIONS THAT SILENCE BILINGUAL PARENTS IN SCHOOLS

By Ingrid Andrea Dumas

This study suggests that communication between families and teachers or school personnel often acts antidialogically to discourage deeper levels of involvement and the necessary conversational relationship-building that leads to and sustains partnership between schools and families. Communications often limited to parent-teacher conferences socialize family members into passive listening or silenced roles. This participatory research study involves six Spanish bilingual family members sharing their stories of communicating and working with schools collected from the researcher's fifth grade class in San Jose, California.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have many people to acknowledge for their participation in this study. I'd like to begin by thanking my professors Dr. Victoria Harper, Dr. Carolyn Nelson, and Dr. Kristeen Pemberton who introduced me to many new "distant teachers," the educational theorists like Paulo Freire, William Doll, and Chet Bowers, whose works have stimulated deep reflection on my practice as a teacher and my place in the world as a human. Because they have cared enough to develop a graduate/credential program that challenged my intellect and engendered deep growth, I have entered the teaching field with the fullest toolbox I can imagine–one that grows with me as I continue to contemplate the world.

Without my participants' stories and time and their willingness to develop a relationship with me, I could not have learned as deeply as I have. I am grateful for their courage and determination to "know" and to share their lives with me.

I have also had numerous conversations with colleagues that strengthened my understanding of this research. I thank Meg Van Buren, Rebecca Caffery, and Mark Mayol for their constant dedication to dialogue with me. I thank Mark Mayol for the loving support, critical ear, and timely phrases of encouragement and appreciation for my work especially in low moments in the research process. It was our dialogic circle that provided me a forum to identify my place in the world, name it, and develop a rich awareness of my role as a teacher, a graduate student, a woman, a colleague and a friend.

I want to return to give a special thanks to Dr. Victoria Harper for giving so much time in weekly conversations, phone calls, and numerous readings to assist my colleagues and I in our quest to "know" better. Dr. Harper has been the initiating inspiration for undertaking this graduate work and the continued example of a woman, a parent, an educator, and an administrator working to transform the world.

Finally, I dedicate my work to my mother, Bridget Dumas. She has supported my self-discovery all my life and has socialized me to think deeply and find satisfaction and peace in my life for myself. Thank you for the space to create my own understanding of the world.

CONTENTS

PROLOGUE

The Bad Kangaroo

There was a small Kangaroo who was bad in school. He put thumb-tacks on the teacher's chair. He threw spitballs across the classroom. He set off firecrackers in the lavatory and spread glue on the doorknobs.

"Your behavior is impossible!" said the school principal. "I am going to see your parents. I will tell them what a problem you are!"

The principal went to visit Mr. and Mrs. Kangaroo. He sat down in a living-room chair.

"Ouch!" cried the principal. "There is a thumb-tack in this chair!"

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Kangaroo. "I enjoy putting thumbtacks in chairs."

A spitball hit the principal on his nose.

"Forgive me," said Mrs. Kangaroo, "but I can never resist throwing those things."

There was a loud booming sound from the bathroom.

"Keep calm," said Mr. Kangaroo to the principal. "The firecrackers that we keep in the medicine chest have just exploded. We love the noise."

The principal rushed for the front door. In an instant he was stuck to the doorknob.

"Pull hard," said Mrs. Kangaroo. "There are little globs of glue on all of our doorknobs."

The principal pulled himself free. He dashed out of the house and ran off down the street.

"Such a nice person," said Mr. Kangaroo. "I wonder why he left so quickly."

"No doubt he had another appointment," said Mrs. Kangaroo. "Never mind, supper is ready."

Mr. and Mrs. Kangaroo and their son enjoyed their evening meal. After the dessert, they all threw spitballs at each other across the dining-room table.

from *Fables* by Arnold Lobel

When I came across this fable as a student teacher developing my research question, it evoked in me recognition of a familiar problem that develops as families and schools continue to not understand each other as they don't listen to or communicate with each other. I present the fable as an illustration of how typical miscommunication and

lack of communication occurring between school personnel and families impedes community building and the possibility of families and schools working together.

The message of the fable reveals a gap between the lived-experience of the school representative and of the Kangaroo family. Both are imbedded in their own realit*ies* and interpretations of the world because of their developed sociocultural knowledge. This knowledge or understanding of the world grows out of a process of socialization throughout their lives by various guiding factors such as family dynamics, cultural heritage, social status, economic background, and schooling.

Notice in this tale how the principal goes to the Kangaroo family's home to *tell* them that their son is a problem. He didn't approach the family to understand the child's behavior. When the principal meets the rest of the family, it becomes clear to the reader that the Kangaroo's son reflects his family's cultural values. In his family the small Kangaroo is just right.

The fable highlights the imposing posture that the school representative holds and how little the family and the principal know about and understand each other. The fable's ending leaves us with a sense that the principal assumes the worst and dashes away deciding that the Kangaroo family is deficient from his point of view. The Kangaroo family, on the other hand, assumes the principal's hurried departure is linked to his role as an administrator. In the end, the family and the school are not communicating and the issue that initiates the story remains unresolved. As educators continue to grapple with strategies for improving school effectiveness and safety, test scores, and student success, we might stop and discuss what we think the purpose of schooling is

with others, particularly families of the students we teach. In that dialogue we might come to understand each other and move beyond the focus on behaviors and differences that are thought to be the real problem.

As you read the following sections, keep this fable in mind as a lens through which to understand the problem I have highlighted and discussed. In the spirit of one of my distant teachers, Paulo Freire, whose theories guided my research and opened windows of understanding for me as a teacher-student, I hope this research will initiate some dialogue between teachers and other school personnel as well as spark dialogue *with* families in our school's communities.

CHAPTER ONE:

UNVEILING THE PROBLEM

Socialization: Cultivating a "Culture of Silence" or Stimulating Critical Consciousness

What many teachers and school personnel describe as seeming disinterest, lethargy, and non-participation of families in the schools is clearly linked to what Brazilian educator Paulo Freire calls the "culture of silence" (1970, 12). The authority structure of schools and the traditional relationship between teachers and the families of those they teach mimic a paternalistic political domination. Both deliberately and unconsciously the patterns of communication and prescribed manners for participation and communication with schools remove parents' and families' sense of needing to know or being encouraged to become a member of the school community. Families are directed, guided, and told when to be a part of and why they should want to be a part of their children's education. It is clear that the whole educational system is one of the major instruments for reproducing and maintaining this culture of silence (Freire 1970, 12).

Chet Bowers (1987) explains that throughout our lives, in our families, in school, in our jobs, in our local and larger communities, each of us are socialized to conform to predetermined norms. In the most general sense, these norms are predetermined by the adults or already educated persons who then socialize the youth or uneducated. This socialization process is how we learn to function in groups, how we realize our roles in

life, how we view the world, and how we know reality. Socialization itself helps us relate to each other through "rules" or customs of behavior or interaction. In and of itself, socialization is how we learn to be.

While Bowers (1987) further states that "the need to think and communicate makes socialization both necessary and inevitable," (44) he stresses the need for those who socialize others (teachers, parents, institutions, etc.) to examine their assumptions about the dynamics and consequences of socialization. Since socialization involves the sharing from an already "knowing," initiated person, for example from a parent to a child or a teacher to a student, the process of socialization "implies an inequality among individuals" (Bowers 1987, 44).

The implications of these hierarchical dynamics require careful examination of the ways schools and teachers socialize families to specific norms. As teachers tell parents what behaviors are normal or acceptable, what knowledge is important, Bowers says that parents are likely to experience the objectification of their reality and subsequently internalize a sense of powerlessness (1987, 46). Over time the internalization of such powerlessness leads to silencing family voices in schools.

Freire's theories of dialogic and antidialogic actions (1970) provide an additional framework within which to understand the extent to which the socialization process is dialogic or antidialogic. Dialogic socialization involves a liberating educational process providing opportunities for people *to become* for themselves whereas antidialogic socialization makes others conform to a set of guidelines deemed necessary and important by "others." The former nourishes empowered, communicatively competent

persons who have the social, cultural and political literacy to participate fully in society negotiating meaning and establishing purpose in the world for them selves (Bowers 1987, 2). The latter restricts creative thought and development and maintains the status quo (Freire 1970). According to Freire, through four identified antidialogic actions, *conquest*, *divide and rule*, *manipulation* and *cultural invasion*, members of a dominant oppressor group impose their objectives and world views onto the majority oppressed group. These antidialogic actions make socialization leading to what he identifies as cultural invasion possible. Often this imposition occurs unconsciously by well-intended individuals, teachers, for example, who have been socialized themselves in the same educational system and society. Not having critically examined their role as socializing agents, teachers consequently perpetuate further socialization in the schools.

Consequently, the critical voice of many second language parents is silenced as they struggle with basic levels of communication with teachers, administrators, and office staff who do not speak their language and cannot respect nor understand their cultural values. Due to their authoritarian position and mainstream world-view, many second language parents feel uncomfortable approaching teachers and schools with questions or concerns. This hesitation and difference in perspectives is often misinterpreted by school personnel as a lack of interest and is often disrespected as a valuable set of beliefs.

The description of parents as uninterested agents in a child's education does not fit my understanding and experience with various language minority parents. Even in my own childhood, financial barriers kept my mother and grandmother–my caregivers–from being visible in the schools as I moved into the intermediate grades. Yet, the teachers

could not accurately evaluate my mother's interest, level of involvement, or the importance placed on education in my home without knowing what happened in our home beyond school hours. We all sat at the table, my toddler brother, my two younger sisters, my mother, my grandmother and I, just after dinner to do our "homework." My grandmother would write in her journal, my mother studied for her nursing classes, and the children would draw, write, create and/or actually complete assigned homework tasks.

Now, I share such a description of my family experience because at first glance, a teacher might have only seen "single mother," with four children, no college education, and a "welfare" family by reading the official documents provided in the permanent school files. The teachers in our schools may have proceeded to sign us up for all the benefits distributed to single-parent families assuming the situation to be detrimental.

In light of what I view as a misconstrued attitude about "absent" parents, particularly second language families who must contend with additional barriers in communicating with teachers, I engaged Spanish bilingual parents in dialogue for this research. I initiated conversations to identify ways in which teachers and schools culturally invade parents' life-worlds resulting in the initiation and maintenance of a passive, silenced role in schools.

Pilot Inquiry into the Problem

While student teaching I became interested in the role of parent-teacher communication as a way to help engage students in school. Harper, Nelson and Mayfield's (1997) article on the role of learning conversations in parent-teacher

conferences served as the initial spark for my interest in how regular communication with parents and students in kindergarten classes might raise student interest levels in the classroom. Wang, Haertel and Walberg (1993/1994) synthesize research on student learning influences and report that the quality of teacher-student interactions can lead to building self-esteem and fostering membership in the classroom community. They go on to describe family involvement as an important "out-of-school" education influence.

As I built better relationships with the students in my cooperating teachers' classrooms, I wanted to know how conversations about home and with family might increase a student's engagement in schooling. I also wondered how learning conversations with parents might engage parents in their children's schooling, help build their self-esteem, and enhance their membership in the school community. Being Spanish bilingual and aware of gaps in communication between schools and Spanish speaking families that are greater than gaps existing with other groups, I began to focus on engaging this community.

Enlarging the evaluation process to include parents collaborating with schools in student assessment, Howard and LeMahieu (1995) claim that parents learned a great deal about what actually was being taught in school, the quality of the assignments, and how well this instruction served their children. Inviting parents to be part of the conversation about student grading provided an authentic opportunity to participate in conversations with teachers and schools and supported their literacy in school culture and purposes.

Howard and LeMahieu's parent-school collaboration research stimulated my thinking about possible contexts for dialoguing with parents. To build a better

understanding of issues parents face in education or the barriers that parents confront in attempting to involve themselves in their child's education, I planned pilot research that included direct conversations with parents about their hopes and concerns for their children and opportunities to explore their own experiences working with schools and helping their children.

Interested in how others have run similar parent groups, I contacted Gabriela Garcia, a bilingual outreach counselor in the Bayside School District who had recently started her group, *Mujer Latina* (Latin Women). I arranged to meet with her to discuss how she created parental interest in attending her meetings.

Mujer Latina: A Parent Group Model

In sharing the process of initiating her parent outreach group, Gabriela expressed concerns similar to my own about the mothers she worked with. *Mujer Latina,* was initiated as a part of a grant for addressing domestic violence in her school district's community. Early on Gabriela had realized that the group would be successful only if it addressed the many needs these mothers had to address: shortage of money and food, lack of cultural knowledge in helping their children in school, lack of self-esteem, a missing consciousness that they were valuable beings, and as important, the realization that they had a problem to solve—an abusive environment.

Gabriela acknowledged how addressing these issues was essential if she was to transition the group into a forum for introducing problematic situations such as doing all the house work at home or physical and emotional abuse. She began by initiating a number of getting-to-know-you sessions where the group made crafts and talked casually

together. After relationships were building among the group members, Gabriela then introduced a more formal chatting circle where she demonstrated talking more about home issues and feeling bad about not getting the help that she wanted at home. Her problematizing of her own situation at home created an opportunity for the *Mujer Latina* group to begin reflecting on whether they too had issues to consider. Eventually, Gabriela led a series of mini lessons about how women might help themselves, to help their children in school, cook more healthy meals and raise their children with love and care. Gabriela tried to always provide information or invite speakers who could provide the information the group wanted. The introduction of information, however, was only provided after a request was made by the group or a problem was identified within the group's community.

Conceptualizing "Valuable" Involvement through Dialogue

Prior to my conversation with Gabriela, I didn't feel helping a teacher prepare for activities constituted "real" parent involvement as I had begun to formulate my theoretical ideas influenced by Paulo Freire (1970, 1973) and Concha Delgado-Gaitan (1990, 1991). I envisioned "involvement" as parents having a voice as co-teachers helping to design school and classroom goals. Hearing Gabriela Garcia' personal story, however, made me realize the potential power for parents of sitting and observing in a classroom and of stirring a need to participate and to build relationships with teachers.

Gabriela's anxious feelings about being involved in her daughter's education had been transformed in the act of being invited to sit in her daughter's kindergarten class. Gabriela explained,

> . . . she [the teacher] made me part of her class and, you know, sitting down in the corner cutting papers, I was learning and watching and . . . that's how I gained confidence.

Feeling timid about her low level of English proficiency and her lack of understanding about how American schools worked, for Gabriela, cutting and tracing materials for the teacher gave her the opportunity to sit and observe safely. As she participated in this simple manner she began to understand how American schools work. This opportunity bolstered Gabriela's self-esteem and showed her how to be involved in another way. It became apparent as I listened to her story that Gabriela, a Colombian immigrant, lacked knowledge about school culture in the United States. This could have been a significant barrier to her involvement in her child's education. However, she watched other parents bring their children to school and this was what initially brought her to the school. The language barrier was then temporarily overcome in the simple act of the teacher inviting her to observe, thereby allowing her to become a member of the class community.

My conversation with Gabriela, a parent herself, helped me understand what parents might consider valuable involvement in education and what parents may feel they need. Our conversation also emphasized the imperative need for dialogue between schools and families in order to identify areas of concern and reach co-developed goals.

Another outcome of my conversation with Gabriela was my new appreciation for a wide range of opportunities, co-designed by parents and teachers, for parents to be involved and learn how to be involved in their own way. Gabriela's story highlights the importance of teachers and parents sharing experiences with one another. I also began to see the potential "catch 22" that exists in parents not feeling welcome in schools and in

teachers not feeling secure enough to invite parents in. Reflecting on this led me to believe a solution may exist in the *praxis* (reflection and action) of dialogue between schools and families—what Freire calls an education designed to promote critical consciousness (1973).

Early in the pilot study I also interviewed Velia Estefan, a bilingual elementary school teacher in San Jose, about her thoughts on why Spanish speaking parents do not seem to be active and visible in the schools. She stated that parents who want to be involved in their children's education often experience difficulty with a language barrier. Additionally, she thought parents seemed uncomfortable working in the classroom because they failed to see themselves as valuable resources within the context of school.

Parents from Velia Estefan's school, similar to members of *Mujer Latina,* lived within low socioeconomic contexts and frequently lacked formal education. Velia emphasized that some of these parents felt they had no right to question the authority and "knowledge" of teachers and schools. She saw this as the biggest obstacle to parents becoming involved in their children's education. Supporting this view, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) claims that not understanding the nuances of school culture, or the "rules" as Burbules (1993) might describe the cultural conventions of talking to and with school staff and teachers, can make it difficult for some parents to know how they are "allowed" to be involved.

As I talked with more staff members and parents at J.M. Elementary School, I began to visualize a broad spectrum of potential parent involvement categories. Some teachers described parent involvement as including sending food for class activities,

reading to children in class, supporting teachers in behavior modification, sitting on school site councils thereby having input into school decision making, or teaching brief lessons in the classroom.

On the other hand, the parents I spoke with saw their role as limited to supporting teacher-determined directions. In one pilot interview, responding to what he thought he needed to learn in order to help his child in school, one parent exclaimed that he didn't even know what he needed to know in order to ask questions. This parent's statement strengthened my growing belief that dialogue between parents and teachers is imperative and sadly emphasized its absence.

Because I had taught as a substitute at Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School for a year and a half and had completed my two semesters of student teaching there at the school, the faculty and administrators welcomed my interest in working with their parent community. At the end of March 1998, I published an invitation in the March 30 edition of Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School's weekly newsletter announcing a set time for parents to meet with me to ask questions about school and to share their ideas and experiences.

This pilot study unveiled for me an emerging pattern of parents ultimately concerned with their children's futures and identified as a purpose of preparation of their children for academically and financially successful adult lives. It became increasingly clear that neither parents nor teachers had discussed their views with each other to discover inconsistencies in conceptualizing the role and scope of parent involvement and the purpose of schooling.

Unveiling Manipulative Structures Fostering "Silent" Parental Voices

Each week as I waited for parents to come to my meetings, I began to observe interesting structures within the physical school grounds as well as the invisible, yet audible, messages that could deter parents from feeling welcome. Parents were required to check in at the office prior to seeing a teacher. All calls to the school were screened by office staff prior to reaching the teacher. Although the reason behind this may be to protect students and teachers from being interrupted or from possible danger, this protective screen creates an air of guarding teachers from parents or family members from undesired distractions. The message implies mistrust and lack of value in parent presence outside determined involvement opportunities.

Regardless of repeated words of welcome and encouragement to be present, setting aside time for parents turned out to be a low priority within the school. For example, I was bumped more than once from a previously reserved room for a higher-ranking person or objective. As I arrived to meet with the parents I was often told that the space where we were meeting had been turned over to other uses. I understood the schools' need, but at the same time noticed that the parent group sessions were a low priority. Even with my understanding of how schools operate, I was reminded that reserving a room for this purpose did not hold any weight in the end. Developing parent presence and voice in the school didn't seem important when I actually tried to open the doors.

The Major Hurdle: A "Culture of Silence"

At the completion of six weeks of pilot research trying to attract parents to

discussion sessions, I realized that a major hurdle to getting parents involved in dialogue is simply getting them to come to the school. As I spoke with the teachers and staff who were often parents themselves, I heard their own stories about unreasonable expectations placed on busy parents and how the opportunities for involvement made available to them didn't always fit their needs or schedules.

My focus of this research began to turn. I wondered what experiences parents had that discouraged their engagement in the student's education? What fears and feelings did parents have that interfered with their helping their child with homework, projects or speaking with the teachers? What circumstances would enable parents to claim more voice in their child's education? What experiences have parents or families had that have socialized them into a silent presence?

These conversations revealed a lack of understanding of the levels of antidialogic moves by the school and teachers, as well as parents themselves that culturally invade other parents and manipulate and conquer them. This pilot research project heightened my need to examine, through conversations with second language families, evidence of how schools and teachers culturally invade their lived-experience. To clarify myself, I use the inclusive term families and parents throughout this paper to include a broader group of individuals that are frequently caregivers and co-participants in a child's education.

To better understand what experiences may be excluding, manipulating, and molding parents' interaction with schools, I engaged a group of Spanish bilingual parents of my fifth grade students in ongoing conversations. As a guide to these conversations, I

used a methodological approach based on Paulo Freire's (1973) dialogic problem posing, "critical and liberating dialogue," as a forum for stimulating critical consciousness (47).

The following literature review will provide a grounding into the theories that guided my exploration. I will discuss the role of critical theory and post-modern perspectives in reframing our views about schools. I will explore Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy for developing a critical awareness and his theories of antidialogic actions. As dialogue is central to the discussion of critical consciousness, chapter two will include a discussion of Freire (1970) and Burbules' (1993) views on dialogue and its role in empowerment and the development of what Bowers (1987) labels *communicative competence.*

CHAPTER TWO:

ENGAGING "DISTANT TEACHERS" IN CRITICAL THEORETICAL LITERATURE

> "...there is a dire need to develop pedagogical practices...that brings teachers, parents, and students together around new and more emancipatory visions of community. On the other hand, there is a need to recognize that all aspects of politics outside of the schools also represent a particular type of pedagogy, in which knowledge is always linked to power, social practices are always embodiments of concrete relations between diverse human beings and traditions, and all interaction contains implicit visions about the role of the citizen and the purpose of community" (Henry Giroux in Freire and Macedo 1987, 6)

Reframing towards the Post-Modern Paradigm

Standing in juxtaposition to the post-modern paradigm, William Doll (1993) describes the modernist perspective as a closed system. The modernist frame transmits and transfers. In terms of modernist educational philosophy, knowledge held exclusively by experts (teachers and school administrators) would be transmitted and transferred to parents as well as students. In this framework students or parents learn through the transference of information from teachers or texts. Doll alternately posits that a post-modern perspective provides a vision predicated on pragmatic doubt (1993, 61).

Grappling and accepting a perturbing experience motivates people to negotiate with their understanding of the world.

Post-modernism shuns the concept that there is only one way to teach, learn, or know the world. Instead, learning and understanding the world comes from the act of *creating* what it is, not a *predetermined* statement of what the world is. Post-modernism strives to integrate subject with object, mind with body, curriculum with person, and us with others (Doll 1993, 61). This reframing from modern to post-modern creates an opening for more critical views presented by Giroux (in Freire and Macedo 1987), Freire (1970, 1973), Bowers (1987), Kieffer (1981) and others.

A Critical Theory Post-Modern Perspective

Henry Giroux's remarks cited at the beginning of this chapter about an emancipatory vision, the power associated with knowledge, and the interconnectedness of "culture" and human beings are prime concerns of critical theory and a post-modern framework. Post modernism and critical perspectives offer a framework for this study. Different from the technical, scientific way our society is used to identifying problems and diagnosing solutions, critical theory seeks to enlarge our understanding behind the actions we take. As Rex Gibson (1986) states, "critical theory is not simply explanatory, but is committed to enabling changes towards better relationships, towards a more just and rational society" (1986, 2). A primary characteristic of critical theory is its emancipatory interests. Critical theorists seek to understand what's behind taken-for-

granted assumptions and conventional practice or belief in order to take action to transform the world.

Gibson asserts that critical theory specifically lends itself to address "questions that are of vital concern to all teachers" (1986, 2). Why don't all children find success in school? What should be the relationship between student and teacher or between parent and schools? Why are school culture, structure, and organization the way they are? He envisions critical theory as a striving to explain the roots of everyday educational practice. A goal of critical theory according to Gibson, is that all people will be able to determine their own aspirations and in turn will act to make them a reality.

Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy: An Education for Critical Consciousness

> "The important thing is to help men [sic] and nations help themselves, to place them in consciously critical confrontation with their problems. In contrast, assistencialism robs men [sic] of a fundamental human necessity—responsibility..." (Paulo Freire 1973, 16).

Freire (1970) asserts that though some educators have recognized a need to reconcile major incongruencies between the education system and home environments, it is equally important for parents to see the necessity for this reform. Parents, through dialogue with committed educators, must develop their own "*conscientização*"—an awareness of their situation or place in the world (Freire 1970, 49). A continued posture of assisting people to know how to be or how to act removes a person's sense of responsibility and humanness. Changes in how people are taught need to foster "co-intentional" education goals and strategies. The voices of the parents are necessary for

authentic change in schools to be effective (Freire 1970, 51). In this frame, a teacher, an "outsider" in a group, cannot delineate or design programs or make decisions for a group without including them in the process.

The identification of problems, issues and possible solutions must come from within the person or group. Inclusion of parent voices is often mandated in reform proposals as a way to relieve the oppressiveness of merely depositing information about what is good for students and families in education. On the contrary, mandated opportunities or suggestions for parent involvement, more often than not, perpetuate the depositing of knowledge that Freire labels the "banking concept of education" (1970, 53), as the power structure works to culturally invade and socialize these parents and foster the helplessness of a people to define what "is."

Freire's theory of pedagogy for liberation, in contrast, encourages individuals to reclaim their humanity through the process of problem posing. In this way individuals are enabled to develop a *conscientização*–an awareness of their situation or place in the world. Freire proposes that, rather than thoughtlessly fill individuals with language, strategies and knowledge, they are enabled to co-create and develop an understanding of their world with the help of a leader. The process of taking part in "naming the world," (Freire 1970) engages people in humanizing activity that intensifies the benefits of learning and of taking action.

Freire (1970) asserts that parents must be transformed into Subjects of education including their narrative, voice and experience, rather than the objects of education attempting to colonize and acculturate parents into the school's culture, values and

objectives. To initiate this dialogue, Freire emphasizes the necessity of organizing opportunities for critical consciousness building through dialogic relations with parents. Dialogue becomes the forum for problematizing their socialization and opens up a path towards group-generated themes (Freire 1970, Bowers 1987, Doll 1993) that re-balances the power structure within a community.

Banking Concept of Education-Antidialogical Interaction

The polar opposite of dialoguing is what Freire labels banking knowledge (1970, 53) or antidialogical action. As in a closed, modernist frame, inherent in the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed on others by a privileged few such as administrators and teachers. This antidialogical relationship is perpetuated when the teachers assume parents lack "knowledge" and are incapable of handling or creating their own knowledge. The educational professionals, then, consider it their responsibility to deposit the knowledge and strategies for learning. This antidialogical process of *conquest*, *divide and rule*, *manipulation*, and *cultural invasion* objectifies the humanity of the parents thereby dehumanizing them and socializing them into passivity.

It is important to note for new readers of Freire that he does intend the use of "oppressor" and "oppressed" to identify particular individuals; rather, Freire (1970) maintains that we all struggle with the experience oppression. He refers to the oppressor-oppressed relationship as states of being that all have experienced and continue to experience.

Characteristics of Antidialogical Action

Although Freire separates the antidialogic actions into discrete categories that I

will discuss separately, it is important to understand that Freire does not intend for us to believe these actions operate independently of each other in a linear fashion, one action leading to the next. Elements of each antidialogic action are interacting with each other as a process towards maintaining cultural invasion cyclically.

Conquest

Freire calls conquest the first characteristic of antidialogic action. It is the outcome desired in all other antidialogic action–to conquer "by every means, from the toughest to the most refined, from the most repressive to the most solicitous" (Freire 1970, 119). To achieve this end, the conqueror dispossesses the vanquished of their word, expressiveness and their culture, replacing it with his objectives. In conquest the oppressed become the possession of the oppressor, turning humans into things to be manipulated and shaped into the oppressor's image.

Freire asserts that antidialogical interactions serve to conquer the other. The dominant group achieves conquest by imposing its own beliefs and ways of knowing on another person. The oppressed or conquered people are systematically dispossessed of their right to name the world and create their knowledge and their culture. The vanquished's funds of knowledge are dismissed. Once oppressive conditions are formed, antidialogical relationships are necessary in order to maintain these oppressive conditions.

Divide and Rule

One method for attempting to conquer or maintain the conquest of people is to divide the masses into separated, alienated and unorganized beings easily controlled by

the oppressor. In divide and rule the oppressor separates the people in order to maintain power through de-unification. Division is achieved by breaking down society into "local communities" separated from the larger societal context. This division makes it hard for the oppressed to realize their situation in the world and thereby act to transform it. People remain alienated and isolated and therefore divided when they don't see themselves and are not considered a part of the larger context.

Division of the masses might also be achieved through the selection and promotion of "worthy," talented representatives of the oppressed classes. As these leaders are further socialized and their knowledge is funded by the dominating group, they are fit for returning to shape others in their respective communities into the same image. As these leaders no longer live *with* and understand "their" people, the new "leader's" attempts to "awaken" the community act to oppress and colonize them. There is also potential for the local community to develop distrust of returning members of the group as they no longer share the funds of knowledge held by the people. The selective re-education of worthy leaders then acts to further divide the people and prevent the possibility for their critical consciousness. In this way, the dominating group no longer directly has to maintain cultural invasion themselves.

Manipulation

According to Freire (1970), conquest is necessary and present at all times in antidialogic action. To achieve this end, oppressors use divisive tactics or manipulation of reality. Similar to divide and rule, manipulation or mythicizing of the world attempts to "destroy in the oppressed their quality as 'considerers' of the world" (Freire 1970,

120). The oppressors mythicize the oppressed's understanding of the world presenting it as a fixed reality, "something to which people, mere spectators, must adapt" (120).

These fixed realities, these myths to which we must adapt to, include: the myth that all people are free to work where they choose; the myth that the dominant group in recognizing their duty, promotes the advancement of the people, so that the people should accept the words of the elites with gratitude and conform to their standards; the myth of the industriousness and superiority of the oppressors and the laziness, dishonesty and inferiority of the oppressed; the myth of a "free society"; and the myth that we are all equal. These myths are presented through slogans, mass media communications, and through the internalized re-presentation of "truths" passed on to individuals through cultural transmission and socialization in schools.

Through manipulation the dominant, ruling group tries to mold the oppressed group towards their objectives. Manipulation often manifests in the mythicizing of opportunities for social and financial ascent. For example, the oppressor group promotes the benefits of achieving individual success and financial gains. Manipulation becomes especially necessary when the people emerge from reality and begin to notice their reality. Like conquest, manipulation serves the dominant group anesthetizing people so they won't think for themselves (Freire 1970, 130).

Manipulation is also accomplished by establishing pacts between the oppressed and the oppressors. These pacts may appear to be dialogue, but actually serve the interests of the dominant elite since it is the elite group that determines the objectives of the pacts.

Cultural Invasion

A final dimension of antidialogic action is cultural invasion or colonization. Like manipulation and divisive tactics, the goal of cultural invasion is conquest. In cultural invasion the invading group penetrates the cultural context of another group and disrespectfully imposes its own view of the world ceasing to believe in the potentiality of the invaded group.

Cultural invasion involves a static view of the world and implies the inferiority of the invaded group and the superiority of the oppressive group. As the invaders see the invaded group as possessing invaluable beliefs and practices, the oppressors see as their duty the need to transmit superior values on the vanquished. Ultimately, all decision making resides with invaders.

This colonization of another group inhibits all creativity by controlling its expression (Freire 1970, 133). Cultural invasion acts both to dominate others and at the same time results in domination. As people accept the invasion, they begin to respond to the imposed standards, values, and goals of the dominant group. A result of the invasion is that the oppressed begin to accept their imposed sense of inferiority and to reflect the duality of the opposing cultures. Now, "housing the oppressor" the culturally invaded continue the invasion process as they socialize others to their "new" understanding.

Socialization

In general terms, Bowers (1987) describes socialization as the process of learning societal habits, norms, ways of being, and ways of thinking (33). Socialization occurs

throughout a person's lifetime as a child and later on as an adult learning through everyday interactions about how the world works.

Bowers (1987) refers to socialization as a "language game" (4). Metaphorically teachers and schools make "moves" in this language game to encourage behavior standards and thinking patterns and styles. Teachers have more moves in the authority of their position. This authority automatically includes the coercion of parents to do what the teacher deems appropriate. A historically imbedded paternalistic cultural background compounds this coercion as families defer to the authority of schools and teachers.

Bowers goes on to say that we are fundamentally unaware of our cultural knowledge and that makes it hard to know that we are controlled by the authority in our cultural traditions (1987, 5). This lack of cultural consciousness supports the ease of maintaining antidialogic socialization that culturally invades the other.

C. A. Bowers: Communicative Competence as Empowerment

Similar to Freire's concept of social and political literacy for liberation and what Moll et al. (1992) describe as the "funds of knowledge" that provide us the know how to function in our world is C. A. Bowers' notion of *communicative competence*. Borrowed from Jurgen Habermas, Bowers describes communicative competence as a person's ability to "negotiate meanings and purposes instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others" (1987, 2). Communicative competence goes beyond the facility to speak in various speech settings but to include knowledge or an understanding of a culture's relevant issues. Communicative competence echoes Freire's concept of

critical literacy– the ability to read and write and the social and political fluency that enables a person to act on the world (Freire and Macedo 1987).

Bowers asserts that teachers can contribute to developing communicative competence in providing families and students opportunities to develop 1) an understanding of the cultural forces driving change; 2) knowledge of cultural traditions from which students can decide what assumptions are worth holding on to; and 3) thinking and decision-making skills based on the understanding of the interdependence of relationships, continuities, disjunctions and trade offs (1987, 2). The significance of critical theory that Freire and others maintain is that, in order to remove the power relationships and return choice and empowerment in the world to *all* people, ways of knowing the world must be examined and reexamined by all people as a way of transforming the world. Ways of knowing and knowledge cannot simply be bestowed on people.

Bowers and Freire concur that a people cannot achieve greater power or decision-making positions– in other words, the power to affect policy and change that takes different cultures and experiences into account– without developing communicative competence. Bowers' view is that without examining the mainstream assumptions in society, there cannot be an awareness that there are multiple, valid points of view. No matter how much support parents give their children in education, those who possess greater skill and understanding of how to manipulate the language system of schooling (and of the greater society) will still be the ones who achieve positions in society that hold decision-making power (Bowers 1987, 28).

To counter this imbalance, Freire (1973) promotes problematizing reality by making explicit or "codifying" (graphically representing) beliefs about the world. Awakening this consciousness, parents may come to realize the different opinions educators and parents might hold about education and therefore be better able to effectively transform their context thereby claiming greater empowerment for themselves and their children.

Role of Dialogue in Empowerment

According to Freire, dialogue presents an opportunity for teaching and learning. Dialogue involves much more than the verbal exchange of words with others. For Freire, "dialogue is the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to name the world" (1970, 69). Through dialogue men and women come to understand the world and create knowledge as they attempt to state their specific realities.

To Freire the essence of dialogue is found in "the word." There are two dimensions to the word: reflection and action. Each without the other transforms the word into "idle chatter", into verbalism–alienated and alienating "blah", and into activism–action for the sake of action (Freire 1970, 68). Dialogue cannot occur without praxis–reflection and action.

As participants in dialogue come together to mutually learn from and create with each other, for dialogue to exist, Freire claims there must be present a sense of love, humility, faith and trust. An absence of this climate or one filled with hopelessness leads to empty, sterile, tedious encounters. Dialogue also cannot happen *for* people as it is *with* others in dialogue we negotiate our understandings and cultivate our humanity.

Nicholas Burbules (1993) defines dialogue as marked by open participation between any two or more persons. Burbules limits this definition of dialogue to a "pedagogical communicative relation." Dialogue includes conversational interactions centering on the teaching and learning participants provide for each other. Burbules further develops his concept of dialogue differentiating dialogue into four forms: *dialogue as conversation*, *dialogue as inquiry*, *dialogue as debate,* and *dialogue as instruction*, each with significant implications towards developing and maintaining more egalitarian relationships among people. While Burbules does not claim these categories cover all types of dialogue, he asserts these four forms comprise the major forms of dialogue. The differences between one category and another represent varying assumptions people hold about knowledge, tolerance levels of different perspectives, degrees of cooperativeness or competitiveness and the generation of authority (Burbules 1993, xiv).

Dialogue as Conversation

A spirit of discovery and open participation basically characterizes conversational dialogue. Partners engage mutually in learning and teaching through exploration and questioning of each other. Provided a basic level of trust and affection are present in partners in dialogue, dialogic relations can foster a deeper sense of trust, respect, reciprocity, appreciation, affection, and hope that may present opportunities for two (or more) persons to exchange experiences, feelings and opinions. In these interchanges participants begin to learn from each other and teach each other.

Dialogue as Inquiry

In dialogue as inquiry partners enter into dialogue motivated to answer a question. A person interested in learning something may initiate dialogue understanding that her partner has knowledge or experiences she has not. While only specific to this context, authority is granted to the other. For the dialogue to continue, however, both partners must recognize the established trust and respect for each other or the learning may not take place.

Dialogue as Debate

While maintaining the learning and teaching exchange of dialogue, the form of dialogue as debate is accompanied by a more competitive spirit. An interchange as debate requires a deep understanding of respect, trust and concern for each other in order to move beyond the challenges of attempting to convince another of your perspective.

Dialogue as Instruction

Although typically used to describe an interaction among two individuals, dialogue as instruction can include a larger group of participants involved in discussion, as Dave Bridges notes that

> through dialogical classroom discussion participants can learn not only about the subject matter at hand, but also about expressing themselves clearly to others, learning to regulate their discussions through such conventions as taking turns, listening, and so on; and learning about other people (in Burbules 1993, 9).

As a forum for learning to interact with and discuss, research participants stand to develop social/cultural/political literacy or the communicative competence that is essential for effective communication with and participation in more traditional

opportunities for parent involvement. As parent participants and the researcher-participant develop trust and bonds, some dialogic relations can become instructional opportunities.

Parent Involvement Funding Knowledge and Empowerment

> "...parents who are knowledgeable about the school's expectations and the way in which the school operates are better advocates for their children than parents who lack such skills" (Concha Delgado-Gaitan 1991, 21).

Many researchers see parent involvement as an important avenue to building interest in school, improving school achievement and success, increasing rates of college entrance and completion in various ethnic and immigrant communities and addressing other social issues of communication and transmission of culture to future generations. Although research confirms benefits of parent involvement, this conclusion has been decreed by the exclusive, decision-making, educated group. Freire stresses that effective solutions for people oppressed by the political and social system cannot come from members of the decision-making group. Solutions and mobilization of people come from demystification of how the sociopolitical culture works and an awareness that they as a group are being oppressed (Freire 1970). As Freire describes effective pedagogy for change, teachers and school administrators cannot achieve successful change acting on the behalf of students and parents. Transformation of attributes or awareness and eventually towards taking action must be developed through dialogue *with* the community concerned.

Delgado-Gaitan (1990, 1991) in defining empowerment also stresses the

importance of solutions coming from the actual people involved. Empowerment emerges out of ongoing processes involving *mutual* respect and reflection centered in the community that particular issues concern. People in a community become aware of their condition as a result of seeing the strengths and weaknesses they have in controlling or dealing with their lives (Delgado-Gaitan 1991, 23). This mobilization is effective because the people in a particular group organize themselves, assume responsibility and take pride in initiating action on their issues. Their willingness to do this comes from a stirring desire to change something that comes from the awareness of their situation in the community.

In light of such striking benefits of family involvement, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) identifies a critical need for "involving parents in their children's education beyond a superficial level" (43) and calls for teachers and schools, in the position to help parents be involved if they choose, to make better efforts to provide the necessary opportunities for parents to learn about how schools work. The current state of parent involvement for linguistic and ethnic minorities and low socioeconomic groups contradicts the experiences of the mainstream.

Furthermore, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) explains that ethnic and linguistic minority parents often do not interact with school officials and teachers because they lack sufficient understanding of school culture. Due to barriers such as language and cultural differences, the home culture and school culture are so different from each other making simple communication difficult for many parents. Even parents that want very much to

be involved in their children's education may not know how to contact a teacher or who to contact about questions or concerns.

Significance of Parent Involvement

It was the description of parents particularly of second language families as uninterested and unworthy participants in education that pulled me into this research study. The lack of "parental Involvement" which includes presence and voice in school activities and decisions, working in classrooms, guiding children at home towards educational goals, and placing importance on education appears to be a manifestation of antidialogic actions. The withdrawal from engagement in their child's schooling signals symptoms of a problem or issue surrounding their involvement level.

Literature examining parent involvement in education (Cotton and Wikelund 1989; Delgado-Gaitan 1990, 1991; Howard and LeMahieu 1995; Wang, Haertel and Walberg 1993/1994) consistently reveals the positive benefit of parents being involved in their child's education. The value of parent involvement is so notably recognized that federal funds and federally funded programs such as ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act), Title VII (discretionary funds allocated under ESEA for bilingual education), Upward Bound and Title I (funds allocated for remedial services) require parent involvement as a condition for funding (Delgado-Gaitan 1990, 56). Despite this recognition, Delgado-Gaitan (1991) reports, "parents of ethnically and linguistically diverse students...often fail to participate in the schools in numbers comparable to other majority group parents" (20). In the face of overwhelming agreement about positive linkage between success in schooling and parent involvement, the fact that so many

parents of linguistic, ethnic and lower socioeconomic minority groups are not participating is alarming. I began to wonder what school structures or policies interfere with parent-teacher communication?

According to Delgado-Gaitan (1990) and Harper, Nelson and Mayfield (1997), explanations for the serious incongruency in parent involvement across ethnic, linguistic and socioeconomic populations frequently attempt to describe the problem from a deficit stance. Parents of linguistic minority groups are not seen as having adequate fluency in the language of the schools—English. Other parents are described as not having acculturated into a school's culture and in order to succeed must become like the members of the school or the dominant culture to be successful citizens (Freire 1970). Those who do not are judged as uncaring and disinterested parents. Teachers feel that parents need to learn what they know and have learned about education and supporting academic success, setting off a hierarchical, vertical power structure between a "them" and "us."

Delgado-Gaitan (1991) further claims that a parent's failure to communicate with schools and teachers about and participate more fully in their children's education results from the way schools structure communication and participation opportunities. Frequently, parent involvement is invited only around parent-teacher conferencing, parent-teacher associations, district board meetings, and school site councils all of which require extensive language fluency or social-political literacy. Frequently, involvement is invited in attempt to support staff for special activities or because of behavioral issues. These views towards involvement are barriers that send a message that parents aren't as

welcomed as the verbal words denote and accentuate who are the supposed experts (Harper, Nelson and Mayfield 1997).

Influenced by Paulo Freire (1970) and Concha Delgado-Gaitan's (1990, 1991) work I am interested in what experiences parents have had that have impeded or aided their empowerment process that leads to involvement. In the following chapter I will present a dialogic, participatory methodology that provides an opportunity for including parents' voices in identifying problematic situations interfering with parents' level of involvement and interaction.

CHAPTER THREE:

CRITICAL PARTICIPATORY METHODOLOGY

Rationale for Critical Participatory Research

> "Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators" (Freire 1970, 51).

The act of "naming the world" (Freire and Macedo 1987) is the very process that lets a person take action for herself and own her own reality of our world. As each individual describes the world as she sees it, she names the world (Shaull in Freire 1970, 15). With the core of this research centering on my conversations *with* parents, a critical participatory methodology will be used to promote a true empowerment for all participants.

In general terms, the Webster's New World Dictionary defines empowerment as giving power to or enabling (Neufeldt 1988). Contrary to Freire's notion of empowerment, this definition carries within it the notion of a gift of power handed over by someone else more powerful. Freire (1970) has identified this concept as "banking style" education (Freire 1970). In contrast, Charles Kieffer's definition of empowerment

embraces a positive "sense of self," a "critical comprehension" of the sociopolitical relationship to the self and a "functional competence" in attaining personal and collective sociopolitical goals (1981, 7). Kieffer's definition includes a person's "state of being and a process of becoming" and the development of "participatory competence" (1981, 7). In this sense, empowerment involves developing a sense of responsibility to acquire competence rather than having it handed over.

Building on Freire's (1970) influence, Delgado-Gaitan offers this definition of empowerment:

> Empowerment is an ongoing intentional process centered in the local community involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring and group participation through which people lacking an equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources. People become aware of their social conditions and their strengths; they determine their choices and goals. Action is taken to unveil one's potential as a step to act on one's own behalf. Implicit here is consciousness of and responsibility for one's behavior and willingness to take action to shape it as desired through a social process. (Delgado-Gaitan 1991, 23)

Delgado-Gaitan and Kieffer's definitions of empowerment relate to a person's sense of responsibility in taking action in their own transformation. Empowerment is a continuous journey, a process of discovering one's strengths, how to take action for oneself and being able to advocate for oneself or one's children. Since the "rules" and knowledge needed to fully participate in society change with time and through an ongoing metadialogue, it is important to expand the meaning of empowerment to embody this human process of becoming.

The dialogic process conducted in this research included talking with parents to determine what issues or concerns they want to address, to determine ways they can

assist their children in education, and to demystify the sociopolitical "rules" of educational institutions (Harper, Nelson and Mayfield 1997).

Dialogic Retrospection

In contrast to traditional research, Kieffer (1981) illustrates in a paper presented at the International Meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology that collaboration and participation in research methodology "increases applicability of findings and encourages implicitly empowering outcomes" (1). Kieffer describes a particular approach to critical participatory research that he names *dialogic retrospection.*

Grounded in existential phenomenology and dialectical theories, dialogic retrospection includes participants as active partners in all aspects of the research. Participants help design the research, participate in the generation of data, and assist in interpreting data as it is generated.

The dialogic model Kieffer presents offers an opportunity to reduce the power imbalance that occurs when research is conducted on the behalf of the participants. Dialogic retrospection provides a forum for making power relationships explicit. It shifts the control of information from experts and researchers to the participants and initiates interpretation. Since I'm looking at what experiences parents have had and what barriers may inhibit or nurture dialogic relationships between parents and schools, this dialogical methodology is especially important to this research.

Kieffer's method of dialogic retrospection allows for participants to reflect upon their own language and continuously determine the accuracy of the data by rereading transcribed texts of our conversation. The issue of reliability or truthfulness of data is

reduced as participants are asked to review what was said before and expand upon their thoughts as they feel necessary. Conversing with participants about previous thoughts and themes that emerge for the researcher becomes a forum for including the participants in the naming of the themes and interpretations of the data.

Critical Dialogic Pedagogy

> "Another means to engage students [and parents] in critical and mutual learning can be found in...problem posing." (Ira Shor 1992, 31)

As Shor reflects in his explanation of problem posing, people actively engage in the creation of knowledge, through inquiry rather than merely memorizing a predetermined understanding of the world (1992, 31). Freire developed the critical problem posing method Shor refers to with the intention of providing rural Brazilian peasants an opportunity to develop literacy through a critical examination of their relationship to the larger societal context. To Freire, however, literacy doesn't merely include mastering the mechanical aspects of decoding text and writing techniques (1973, 48). Evident in Freire and Macedo's (1987) work, *Literacy: Reading the Word and the World*, literacy involves more than the ability to decode text; literacy is interconnected with and involves a person's experience in the world. Henry Giroux eloquently defines literacy as being "present and active in the struggle for reclaiming one's voice, history, and future" (in Freire and Macedo 1987, 11). To Freire, literacy is a social-cultural-political fluency and comprehension that he names critical literacy. Freire's notion of literacy includes: 1) consciously dominating reading and writing techniques; 2)

understanding what one reads and writes; 3) communicating graphically; and 4) having an attitude of creation, recreation, and intervention in one's context.

The core of Freire's pedagogy for liberation or the education for critical consciousness is his concept of problem posing. Freire's problem posing methodology involves problematizing the current situation a person or a group lives in by asking people to reflect on and articulate their specific reality. Through dialogue a teacher or facilitator can re-present this reality for re-evaluation. Poised against others in her group, an individual's reflections may call into question her reality. For Freire, dialogic relations are crucial to stimulating critical consciousness.

Freire's Problem Posing Method for Adult Literacy Development

Although Freire's problem posing method was originally intended to develop literacy in Brazilian adult peasants, his five-phase methodology is informative in creating a context for people to develop critical awareness of their situation. The first phase of problem posing involves researching the vocabulary a group uses in describing their realities. Vocabulary is observed during informal interactions. These informal conversations reveal typical feelings, longings, beliefs, feelings, and motivations people have about their situation in the world.

Next, a multidisciplinary team selects generative words from the informal interviews. Words are selected based on 1) phonemic richness, 2) phonetic difficulty, and 3) pragmatic tone. The greater correspondence between a word and its pragmatic tone, the greater potential there is for stimulating critical awareness.

In the third phase, the selected words are codified into visual representations in

the form of posters, pictures, drawings, slides or filmstrips of typical situations-problems from the group the researcher is working with. These codifications serve to challenge their perceived reality. The following discussion of the codifications provides the forum for stimulating critical consciousness of a group's situation in the larger societal context.

As issues are identified the group creates a schedule to continue decodifying these parents' situational reality. Unlike the modernist frame of inflexible, rigid schedules for achievement, the participants create this agenda with the facilitator as a guideline for proceeding. Finally, in the fifth phase new codifications are created for further dialogue, but are intended to stimulate taking action.

Freire's belief is that literacy is relevant and meaningful to people when it relates to their lived-experience and connects what they already know about the world. The educator's role in this literacy development is to enter into dialogue with people about concrete situations and then offer the students the tools they need to teach themselves how to read and write (Freire 1973, 48). Similarly, my role as an teacher-researcher working with parents is to engage them in dialogue about their experiences working with schools and teachers in order to begin to understand what they identify as issues in working with schools on their child's education.

Alternative Dialogic Methodology

Freire's problem posing is one approach to dialogic methodology. Raymond Padilla (1993) emphasizes the importance of dialogic methodology in the way that it redefines the roles of researchers and participants. The results of dialogic research are really intended to benefit the participants (Padilla 1993, 153). Padilla says, "the power

of dialogue to increase awareness and to help individuals to change their circumstances derives from the potency of language itself" (1993, 153).

According to Padilla, dialogic methodology provides a potent opportunity for oppressed persons to reflect on their reality and change their knowledge. It is his view that dialogic research can be combined with other methodologies to assist disenfranchised people with claiming their own knowledge (Padilla 1993, 166).

Padilla's research (1993) on dialogic methodologies reveals a powerful empowerment strategy in the role of dialogue itself. From initial dialogue with my participants, the need for following a formal problem posing methodology did not emerge. It became clear that building dialogic relationships with the participants was critical to transforming "typical" teacher-family relations before attempting to engage them in rigid schedules of critical awakening strategies. I used Freire's critical problem posing method to inform me as I posed problems during dialogue interviews as a means for sparking further conversation.

Research Site

I conducted this research between July 1998 and May 1999 at Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School, one of thirteen schools in the Lincoln School District in San Jose, California. This kindergarten through sixth grade school site sits in south central San Jose serving diverse ethnic and linguistic working class populations. During the 1998-1999 school year, enrollment included about 830 students representing ten different language groups (*Annual Report to the Community 1996-1997*). Among the many

languages represented in the community are English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Cambodian, Thai, Laotian, and Punjabi.

The community is home to families that have emigrated from many parts of the world. The largest number of students and families 45.5% (*Annual Report to the Community* 1997) identify themselves as Hispanics. Another 26.9% of students are identified as Asian. Filipino students make up the third largest student population at Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School with 16.7%.

Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School was selected for this research because it serves a diverse linguistic community. Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School, which experiences a "typically" low rate of family participation in school activities, was an ideal site for understanding the home-school dynamics of family involvement. In addition, the principal being new to the school, held the goal to increase parent involvement. Beginning this school year, July 1998 through June 1999, the principal has initiated staff training and participation in a district program called Family and Schools Together (F.A.S.T.)

Data Gathering

Because one of my research goals as a teacher is to understand how to better help students and their parents find success in schooling, and to facilitate taking on this responsibility, Freire's critical problem posing pedagogy is an influential theory informing my understanding of the potential power relations between teachers and students, schools and society. Freire's pedagogy intends to demystify the workings of the world in order to return the empowerment of self-determination to people.

To achieve this goal, I initiated dialogue with parents-participants in order to understand their concerns, hopes and desires for their children's success and as a forum for stimulating an awareness of the obstacles they as parents may contend with in the process of education. Through dialogue the teacher-researcher-participant can learn the goals parents may have and can create *with* parents-participants some directions for obtaining their goals as they define what these are. Freire's critical problem posing method was a critical forum for assisting parents in determining what barriers they felt they face. As these parents began to understand their situation set in the context of the larger society, I hoped to help coordinate the critical literacy development needed for continuous advocacy. According to Freire, the development of *conscientização* is crucial to stirring motivation and a sense of responsibility to be involved in our democratic process.

Borrowing from Freire, "reflection—true reflection—leads to action" (1970, 48). In order to facilitate such reflection, I conducted critical participatory research following Freire's critical dialogic problem posing method (1973). Freire asserts that the act of dialogue requires persons to reflect on and organize their experiences into thoughts and words. Reflection on past interactions with teachers and schools may stimulate a new consciousness of their disempowered status not recognized before.

Research Participants

The following descriptions of the participants reflect their lived experiences. To protect their identity, the research participants' names have been changed.

Adriana Aceves

Adriana is a mother of three children, her oldest son in my fifth grade class. When her oldest child entered school six years ago, Adriana didn't speak much English. Today she attributes attending various classes offered through the Even Start Program designed to assist parents in understanding how school's operate and bridge the gap between home and school culture. She also found sitting in on her children's classes in early years helped her acquire English fluency and an understanding of what she could help her children with in school.

As her children got older, Adriana began to take courses towards becoming a dental assistant. She now chooses work part-time so she can be available to pick up her children from school and support in anyway she's able to do their homework.

Adriana, her husband and her children live close to the school in south central San José. Regardless of their home's proximity to the school, Adriana accompanies her children to the school every morning until the bell rings and is there every day when school lets out.

Patricia Mendez

When she was in third grade Patricia's family moved to the San Jose area from Mexico. She was immediately entered in a Spanish bilingual program that she feels strongly helped her make it through school. By sixth grade bilingual education was dismantled (in the late 1970's) and then she had a hard time keeping up in school.

Today, she recalls how schools only signed her up for remedial math courses that she later realized weren't necessary as she passed the many math courses necessary to

earn a college degree. She remembers having no interest in college until a teacher invited her to a special awards ceremony. Despite earlier struggles in school, Patricia is a graduate of Evergreen Community College with a degree in Business Administration. Since she graduated she has worked full time in a medical insurance company.

She and her husband now live near Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School where their daughter attended my fifth grade class. Patricia and her husband also have a four-year old son who will attend kindergarten in the next school year and are expecting a baby in the winter.

When we met, at her request, Patricia and I had our conversations in my classroom at Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School. Our meetings always happened after she got off work around 6:00 in the evening. She felt more comfortable at the school, she explained, since her mother was ill and living with them. As our relationship developed she also revealed that her husband felt it was the school's job to teach their daughter and so our partnership didn't make sense to him. Patricia explained his beliefs as coming from a traditional Mexican male who hadn't graduated from high school.

Veronica and Julian Contreras

Veronica and Julian Contreras are the parents of two sons both who attend Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School. They immigrated from Michoacan, Mexico almost eleven years ago just after they had their first son who was in my fifth grade class. Today they live in a house just a few blocks from the school. Julian works days returning home in the early evening while Veronica works evenings after her children get out of

school. The children stay home alone for a couple of hours awaiting their father's return with strict orders to remain indoors at all times.

Due to Mexico's education system, Veronica completed the equivalent of an eighth grade education. Families without the money to pay for "high school" do not send their children to school beyond eighth grade. Julian's education includes attending the University of Mexico City.

Christina Rodriguez

Christina is a thirty-year old sibling of one of my students and the head of the household including a younger sister, and teenage brother, her infant niece and Karina, the student in my class. Just this past school year Christina was handed the responsibility of guardianship of her sister while her parents oscillate from Veracruz, México to San Jose throughout the year. This school year working with me began her first interactions with teachers and schools.

Carmen Vargas

Carmen is Christina's mother. She participated in conversations with me because she just happened to be staying with her family in San Jose when I initiated conversations with Christina. She has been very involved in all of her children's schools since her oldest was very small in Veracruz. Carmen has had previous experience with American schools from the first time she enrolled her youngest daughter in school a couple of years prior to attending Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School.

Now that her older children have begun their own families, Carmen explained that her time is needed in caring for grandchildren. She had never been to the school or met

prior to our first meeting. Christina, Carmen and I met Saturday mornings about 10:00 a.m. in their family room. Each of our "meetings" included a long family greeting as each family member stopped what they were doing to greet me and even stay a moment and listen to the conversation.

Dialogic Interviews

> "...dialogue does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not sloganize" (Paulo Freire 1970, 149).

Much of the data I collected consists of dialogue, electronically recorded, open-ended interview-conversations, between the research participants and myself in individually chosen settings. Dialogue removes the power differential typically existent in parent-teacher or researcher-subject interactions and, as Freire puts it, is "the way by which ...[we]... achieve significance as human beings" (1970, 69).

Dialogic interviewing allows participants to tell in their own voices their experiences and thoughts on a particular topic. In this process of telling their narrative, the research participant makes sense of her experiences and shares them within the context of her lived-experience. As Mishler asserts

> Through their narratives people may be moved beyond the text to the possibilities of action. That is, to be empowered is not only to speak in one's own voice and to tell one's own story, but also to apply the understanding arrived at to action in accord with one's own interests (Mishler 1986, 119).

As participants tell their stories, they are organizing their experiences in a meaningful way for their audience. In this process, the participant must reflect on experiences and evaluate their position as they tell their story. Therefore, dialogue interviews

characterized by open-ended questioning, leaving room for ideas and meaning to emerge from the interaction itself initiates the empowerment process.

I primarily gathered data from dialogue interviews with six parents of my fifth grade classroom guided by Freire's critical dialogic problem posing method. As a means for gaining a clearer understanding for what issues or concerns parents in my fifth grade class have had in working with schools, I used a research methodology based on Freire's dialogic problem posing method. Denis Goulet eloquently restates Freire's central message: "one can know only to the extent that one 'problematizes' the natural, cultural and historical reality in which s/he is immersed" (in Freire 1973, ix). According to Freire, to problematize is to codify (visually represent) reality into symbols which can initiate the process of *conscientização.*

Inherent in Freire's problem posing is to begin with the lived-experience, the phenomenological world of the participants that includes their specific language. Initially, as a means of stimulating dialogue with parents about their experiences interacting with schools and teachers, I asked participants open-ended questions such as:

1. Tell me a story about an experience you've had talking with teachers or school staff.
2. Over the years, what has been your experience working with teachers and schools?
3. What has been your relationship with the principal?
4. What kinds of situations have you talked with schools or teachers about?
5. What would you change about schools?

These open research questions provided an opportunity to gain a better understanding of these parents' experiences in their own descriptive language. In the

course of dialogue, I asked further questions and posed problems as themes emerged from our individual conversations as well as collective themes from all the participants. Since the data I collected included the direct experience of the participant, it was necessary to leave these conversations open-ended and to stimulate the parents' language and experience.

Due to the schedule differences and comfort levels of the participants I first chatted with each person about my interest in their stories of working and interacting with schools either by phone or in a casual interaction before or after school hours. I scheduled the first conversation with each participant at a time and location that best fit their needs. During these conversational interviews I initiated dialogue surrounding sharing experiences talking with previous teachers, office staff, and administrators. To further stimulate these first conversations, I also presented the participants with what I thought were situations exemplifying issues in communicating with teachers. As Freire describes in problem posing, this initial interview unveiled the participants' specific vocabulary related to their experience.

As a strategy to observe and evoke further critical consciousness and similar to Freire's codification of the participants' realties, I followed Kieffer (1981) in providing participants with transcriptions from our conversations. Borrowing from Freire,

> In the process of decoding, the participants externalize their thematics and thereby make explicit their "real consciousness" of the world. As they do this, they begin to see how they themselves acted while actually experiencing the situation they are now analyzing, and thus reach a "perception of their previous perception." By achieving this awareness, they come to perceive reality differently...(Freire 1970, 96).

The de-coding of our text or the dialogic retrospection Kieffer promotes (1981), initiates

reflection and further instructs us to clarify and expand our thoughts. This metacognitive representation of a person's situation–an awareness of where her thoughts are at a certain point in time–invokes reflection and poses an opportunity to re-think, clarify and even change her conscious position on a topic. In addition, this collaboration, this dialogue about our dialogue, ensured that I did not impose my bias and reality on the participants and thereby maintained a more ethical perspective and parental voice in the study.

Through this dialogic problem posing form, my proposed learning conversations with parents emphasized a mutual sharing and spirit of discovery about each other's experiences and goals for future interactions. These dialogues between parents and myself have created dialogic relations that Burbules tells us can help foster the emotional bonds of respect, trust, and concern that are crucial to entering into instructional dialogue (Burbules 1993, xii). Discussion about our initial dialogue guided our second conversations and often led toward richer, more open dialogue revealing additional specific examples of the barriers the participants' contended with in working with schools.

Observations and Field Log

As I dialogued with the parents of my fifth grade class I used a field note log to record my insights and observations around interactions with parents. In instances where conversations could not be electronically tape recorded, I took field notes and then within twenty-four hours wrote detailed journal notes. Following Glesne and Peshkin's (1992) guide for qualitative research observations and field notes, my field log was a descriptive

and analytic journal of my thoughts, insights and observations about settings and the participants' actions during an interview.

The field note log allowed me to record my thoughts just following an interview and any insights I gained in the process of dialoguing before I even transcribed and formally analyzed data, and a description of the interview setting. Notes I took following one conversation often sparked discussion with other participants as themes seemed to emerge. From this initial analysis I could present the participants with my thoughts about parents' interactions with schools and teachers and discuss their response to my interpretation of their experiences.

Document Analysis

My data collection also included document analysis of the school's various written policies and information for and contacts with parents. These documents shed light on the administration's goals and current attempts to include parents in the school community. I analyzed the language of school documents to reveal the antidialogic nature of and inconsistencies between published goals and policies and personnel actions.

Data Analysis

Following qualitative research analysis outlined by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), I analyzed the data throughout the study to allow the participants' stories and description of the barriers impeding their communication with teachers to guide the research further (127). The many levels of analysis included journal entries after reading the first transcriptions, re-presentation of themes and insights to participants for further

discussion, and reviewing the transcripts for themes related to antidialogic actions and grouping them to reveal patterns in the participants' stories.

For each dialogue with the participants I systematically transcribed our text on a word processor. Then, I examined the data looking for evidence of the culturally invaded parent and of schools culturally invading and socializing parents into school culture. As my role as a qualitative researcher includes being open to other possible themes, I examined the data for participant-identified themes and barriers to working with schools that emerged in these parents' use of language about their experiences working with schools and teachers.

About the Researcher

I grew up in Santa Cruz County, the oldest daughter of four children in a single parent household. Until I was sixteen my family moved frequently from rental to rental forced to live in places where four children, a cat and a grandmother might co-habitate on little income. During those sixteen years I lived in many homes: near Beach Flats in Santa Cruz, California, a small house near the Santa Cruz Lighthouse, on an overgrown orchard in the Santa Cruz mountains, down town Soquel, and in a tract house in Watsonville, just behind, supposedly, "gang infested" apartments.

My readings in graduate school and my credential program combined with various conversations and observations as a student and substitute teacher have presented me with a disturbing view about the school experiences of diverse ethnic and linguistic populations. Most disturbing to me has been listening to teachers describe parents of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds as uncaring or disinterested in their children since they

do not consistently attend parent-teacher conferences nor volunteer to assist the teacher in the classroom. When I hear teachers and even other parents describe ethnically or linguistically diverse parents as lazy, uneducated, uncaring and unwilling to adopt specific habits of behavior thought to bring about success, I am baffled. My mother found it difficult to physically be involved in the schools. I have been in close relationships with many people that would fall under the category of culturally different, shared many customs with immigrant and refugee families from Cambodia and Poland, and learned about people from around the world.

Through a process of developing dialogic relations with my fifth graders' parents, I hoped to understand what it has been like for these parents while working with schools. At the same time I hoped to gently challenge them through a totally different interaction style and attitude towards parents collaborating in education. My goal was to record their voices, concerns and dreams and initiate transformation of these past experiences and redirect their experiences working with schools to a more positive one.

Developing these dialogic relationships has highlighted for me the deeply culturally imbedded practice of teachers and schools molding these parents towards a predetermined set of values and "norms" of action. In the following chapter I will present and analyze the data revealing how parents have been colonized, socialized and manipulated into silence by teachers and schools.

CHAPTER FOUR:

SILENCING PARENT VOICE AND PARTICIPATION IN SCHOOLS

The particular experiences of my six participants reaffirms continued struggles of many native Spanish speaking parents whose language and culture differ from that of the teachers and school staff, whose work schedules keep them busy during official school hours, and whose educational experiences or English language proficiency make it difficult to assist their children with school work. As previously described, my impetus for studying dialogic experiences between parents and schools was to unveil specific barriers parents or families contend with as they attempt to maintain or initiate involvement and communication with their child's school. These barriers are noteworthy experiences that deserve continued attention by schools to be more flexible with time schedules and teachers and schools to provide parents translation and language support.

Responsibility for taking care of others has reduced the time these family members' have to participate in the schools or to come talk with teachers or other school staff. Work schedules not congruent with a school's or a teacher's typical day make it difficult for some participants to call or to come to conferences in the afternoon. Veronica Contreras and Carmen Vargas both mentioned their uncomfortableness coming and speaking with teachers (and others) who may not understand Spanish or their family customs and dynamics. Previous interaction with teachers, added Veronica, has made her apprehensive about interacting with teachers again. Adriana Aceves thought many

parents probably feel uncomfortable talking to teachers because their education is "too high." She felt that teachers seem to know so much more and that makes her and others uncomfortable approaching teachers.

What has startled me about the data is the degree to which teachers and schools culturally invade parents' life-worlds, silencing possibilities for true dialogue with parents. The data suggests the need for a deeper analysis and reform of the antidialogic structures and actions impeding home-school interactions. Merely removing the barriers of time, language, and culture differences will not transform the silencing of parent voices. The data reveals how these participants have already been *socialized* to accept cultural norms deemed important by the dominant culture and how these participants have already internalized the messages of the oppressors and thus have come to our conversations already colonized and silenced. From the data also emerged evidence of antidialogical actions that ultimately lead to further cultural invasion of parents by schools.

Immediately apparent in the data was how teachers and schools have socialized parents and families to accept "new" standards that ultimately stifle and silence family members as they attempt to interact and communicate with schools. It is important to note that since all persons have been socialized since birth, many socializing actions remain unexamined and therefore often operate on others in an automatic and antidialogic way. Not reflecting on the how's and why's of the ways we learn to think and believe certain things about the world–our taken-for-granted assumptions (Bowers 1987) – makes people unconscious perpetuators of cultural "norms" which silence our potential voices.

Absence of Dialogue between Home and Schools

The first level of analyzing the data for antidialogic actions that invade parents' life-worlds revealed that dialogue–a back and forth exchange of ideas and thoughts between two or more persons (Burbules 1993), or "the encounter of women and men in the world in order to transform the world" (Freire 1970, 110)–is absent from the typical home-school interactions my participants have had. In the communications between teachers and parents, participants described being "talked to" or "told" what are their children's potential and areas of concern. Communication between school and theses parents did not include what Burbules (1993) names the *spirit of dialogue*– "a kind of social relation that engages its participants" (19). Rather, the participants' stories depict one-sided communication events where they took the role of listener and receiver most often.

In our discussions about his experiences talking with teachers of the school, Julian Contreras characterized his typical conversational experiences with schools like this:

> You know, actually, this is the first time I get into a conversation with somebody from the school.... It's very hard because when you go to, you know, the meetings [parent-teacher conferences], every three months...we just talk like, your son is like this and we say okay. Oh good. That's it.

Julian makes a distinction between the type of communication that has taken place at previous parent-teacher conferences and the conversation between us one Saturday afternoon in his home discussing his experiences interacting with schools and teachers. The pattern of communications with teachers during parent-teacher conferences has been limited to being told how his son is. What's equally as crucial to note is that Julian alludes to a "script" that he says typically guides parent-teacher conferences. His

description of the typical conference also reveals how he has learned to accept the teacher's description of his son and remain quiet and passive in the interaction. The teacher tells and the parents listen. For Julian, previous communicative relationships with teachers did not exemplify dialogic relations where both the parents *and* the teacher attempted to learn from each other engaged in the flow of conversation.

Patricia and I also discussed patterns of communication with teachers and schools. Referring to her experiences working with her daughter's Resource Specialist of the last couple of years. Patricia acknowledged, "I haven't had that much communication with Ms. Holmes other than, you know, when we have the parent conferences." It becomes clear later in further conversation that this lack of communication contact outside of official parent conferences were not simply due to Patricia's lack of interest. Following a discussion of Harper, Nelson, and Mayfield's article, "Transforming Parent-Teacher Conferences" (1997), I asked Patricia to think back on a specific conference she can remember and describe how it unfolded. Who talked? When? Patricia referred to our discussion earlier in the conversation about the traditional conferences Harper, Nelson, and Mayfield (1997) describe.

> It's just exactly like you said. I was there wanting to know how Laura was doing. That's all I was interested in...I go to conferences then ask, how is she doing? Where does she need improvement? You know, like I don't know.

Ending her description sarcastically Patricia alludes to a learned script that parents and teachers usually follow. She holds a wealth of knowledge and experience about her daughter's capabilities and weaknesses, yet she pointedly refers to a role she feels she must take as she interacts with teachers about her daughter's progress.

Shifting our conversation to the examples Harper, Nelson, and Mayfield call "learning conversations"–what Freire and Burbules call dialogue–I again questioned Patricia about her experiences with dialogue between herself and teachers. At this moment Patricia shared

> I haven't met with anyone like I've met with you. Maybe because you're doing this [study]...You know, all they tell me is Laura is not doing well, she needs to practice on her writing. She needs to practice her reading, her math.

Patricia reinforces that her typical contacts with teachers exemplify a "telling" format. She reiterates that this revelation of her daughter's academic strengths and weaknesses are nothing new to her, yet each teachers persists in "revealing" this information. The teachers disregard or even inability to see a parent's expertise socializes the parent into an acceptable communication form. The invasion of a parent's thoughts and knowledge attempts to conform them to behave a certain way and listen closer for further messages for obtaining true success.

Evident in Julian and Patricia's stories, much of the interactions between the participants and schools have taken place in a twenty to thirty-minute session, two to three times a year for parent-teacher conferences. Other "conversations" participants depicted as being initiated over discipline issues, pleas for help in the school, or over academic progress reports. Interestingly, my initial contact by phone asking Julian and Veronica to share their experiences bared Julian's previous experiences leading him to believe that teachers only call home with problems or issues to discuss. Although we had talked for several minutes about my interests in talking *with* them about working with teachers and had set up an appointment date for this, Julian still asked if my call and

interest in them had anything to do with their son. He laughed as I explained my genuine interest in his stories working with teachers saying he assumed I wanted to discuss his son's behavior in class.

In our first interview conversation, Patricia and I had a lengthy discussion of what Patricia believes might help young Spanish speaking students in school. Based on a mentorship experience she had in college, Patricia enthusiastically described how Spanish speaking, bilingual students having a mentor to talk with and support the students' interests and goals in their education would, like it did for her, encourage them to continue and develop a deeper interest in their education.

Excited about the many ideas Patricia holds about bolstering students' attitudes and fostering better connections to school, I pressed to know whether she had shared these great ideas with the administration. "No…I haven't," was all she said at first. Taking the opportunity to pose as a problem her pattern of interaction with school faculty I asked her to describe what her experience, in general, has been working with or talking to the school's principal. Patricia explained, "The only time that I spoke with …[the principal]… is when we were getting used to Mrs. Waters."

Patricia referred to her daughter's fourth grade teacher that they "were having a hard time at first with…" because "…she yelled in the classroom." What's significant here is that Patricia has had a rich experience in overcoming second language and culture acquisition issues in school and has earned a college degree, and yet she has only interacted with school personnel around a problem. She certainly has had experiences with the culture of schools and has acquired a college level of English fluency, the factors

which Delgado-Gaitan (1990, 1991) identifies as what usually impedes parent involvement and is behind the seeming invisibility of parents in schools. That Patricia holds the cultural and linguistic fluency and educational background usually identified as missing in Spanish bilingual parents, and still has had minimal dialogic experiences with schools suggests a critical need to examine what factors undermine dialogic action.

Between our first and second conversations, Patricia read our transcribed text and explained her communication experiences further,

> I guess the reason why I haven't confronted any of the teachers, now that I think, is because I know Laura's fine. I know she's behind, but I know she's trying. She really is trying now.

Typical teacher-parent contact does not include for Patricia a mutual relationship of exchanging of communicative experiences with schools. It isn't necessary to talk with the teachers outside of problems. Patricia's communicative patterns with teachers do not support the attitudes that parents are uncaring and uninterested participants in their children's lives. Rather, her experiences illustrate how through socialization Patricia has "learned" to be a passive bystander in communications between schools and home.

Prior to July 1998, Christina Rodriguez wasn't acting as her sister's guardian and so our interactions were her first home-school communication experiences. It was in dialogue with co-workers that Christina became aware of "typical" patterns of communication between homes and schools. Christina compared our interactions to previous ones her family has had and to the experiences of co-workers she has spoken with. Discussing what aspects of schools or qualities about home-school interaction she

would change, Christina shared an example illustrating the significance to her of our conversation at her home.

> Yesterday I was telling my co-workers because my supervisor asked me to go to work on Saturday and I say no, I can't because I have a meeting with my teacher, my sister's teacher. And they say really? They are going to your house? And I say, yeah. Oh that is good because you can talk and see what is going on with your sister. And I say, yeah, that is what I like. And they said ...that's good. ...Yeah, because you are taking your time to come and visit us and talk.

Christina's co-workers exclaim in surprise that teachers and parents would be sitting down to "talk" especially in their families' home. And in reflecting on this "surprising" event, Christina says later in our conversation that she never saw this kind of interaction with the other American teacher she and her family interacted with. "Maybe," she says, "because my mom was working with the teacher [at the school] and that's why I didn't see her going to my home."

That conversations like ours are "surprising" emphasizes the absence of dialogue between families and schools. Julian, Christina, and Patricia's experiences highlight the typically *nonexistent* patterns of communication between families and schools. Such lack of dialogue occurring between these families who have demonstrated an interest in their children and schools calls to question what factors are impeding a parents' natural drive to talk with their children's teachers?

Supporting the participants' experiences, Harper, Nelson, and Mayfield (1997) stress, much of the "talk" between family members and teachers or schools consist of schools and teachers *telling* families how to behave, *what* are important issues in educating children and *how* success in life and schools is best achieved. This telling

format is evident in how teachers *guide* parents' child rearing practices and children's future goals, for example. These participants' examples of "typical" communication reveal antidialogically-manipulated patterns of communication between teachers and schools, and families of the community which socialize parents into a passive, silent role.

Existing Colonized Status of Parents Facilitating Antidialogic Action

> "Cultural conquest leads to the cultural inauthenticity of those who are being invaded; they begin to respond to the values, the standards and the goals of the invaders...." (Freire 1970, 134)

As nations historically have invaded and colonized other nations, the colonization or what Freire calls the cultural invasion of people involves imposing a system of values on others. According to Freire, "cultural invasion is on the one hand an *instrument* of domination and on the other, the *result* of domination" (1970, 135 emphasis original). In being conquered a dominant group has systematically invaded another culture that eventually begins to accept and reflect the values of the conquerors. Cultural invasion is one method Freire describes that operates to socialize people. As this process occurs over time and is often an invisible, non-explicit part of "growing up" and learning to understand and participate in society, it is important to note that the participants have come to the schools having been socialized through many other realms of social interaction such as cultural transmission, family dynamics, and historical imbedded experience.

The oppressed group not only accepts the new value system imposed upon them, but the colonized, culturally invaded person has also internalized the feelings the

invading group holds about them. Evidence of colonization surfaces in how the oppressed view themselves through the eyes of their oppressors. Describing the oppressed Freire says,

> Self depreciation is another characteristic of the oppressed, which derives from their internalization of the opinion the oppressors hold of them. So often do they hear that they are no good for nothing; know nothing and are incapable of learning anything–that they are sick, lazy, and unproductive–that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness. (Freire 1970, 45)

The depreciated view of the self that Freire describes acts antidialogically, continuing to mold parents to view themselves as unfit for "knowing" anything.

Throughout our conversations, the participants revealed their previous colonized status in how they have internalized messages of inferiority. Describing her interactions with previous teachers Patricia, for instance, recalled a teacher she felt she hadn't had a good experience with. Patricia explained

> The homework was too easy. And I think that's part of the reason why Laura got so behind. I know it's part of my fault too. I should have said something. Well, you know, she's my first child. I don't know what's right or wrong.

Patricia begins to describe possible inadequacies of a teacher's policies and suddenly shifts to express her feelings of inadequacy as a parent and her lack of knowledge. It is crucial to note that Patricia believes that she should have known something more than she did and therefore problems that have arisen are her fault. Probing her further about how she handled her feelings that the teacher wasn't demanding enough from her child, Patricia articulated stronger her sense of depreciated value as an agent in helping her child as we talked:

Patricia: When I met her, [the teacher] . . . said she was doing fine. But later on I noticed that she was getting very, very behind.

Ingrid: Did you approach the teacher and talk about it?

Patricia: [shakes her head] I'm not very good at that.

Her words reveal her belief that only parents "good" at asking questions should and do initiate conversation with their child's teacher. I began to glean a sense of Patricia's belief in the myth that teachers hold the "right" or official knowledge that she should defer to as she expressed what she'd like teachers to help her with.

> You know the other thing that I just thought about...is if teachers would send parents lists of materials that they can buy and where they can buy them from to help their kids. Because I have no...I have an idea, I mean, and I can find out, I can look in the Yellow Pages, but you know, every kid is different and is having different problems.

I was struck by her shift in mid-sentence that she doesn't know how to assist her daughter academically. Then Patricia suddenly qualifies her statement with all the ways she does know but expresses a need to know what teachers feel are appropriate learning materials. This is very revealing of Patricia's previous socialization to believe that teachers hold superior knowledge. Her story stirs up questions as to the experiences she's had previously that have made her feel unfit to discuss an issue with the teacher.

As we carried on our conversation, Patricia continued these references of convinced inferiority summing up her family's history and dynamics that she believes influences the amount of interactions she has with schools as well as her "lack of knowledge." She began,

> Another problem in my family is that my husband didn't graduate from high school either, . . . so he doesn't understand. He tells me she's at school. The teachers are supposed to help her.

In Patricia's view, her husband's lack of schooling contributes to his "uninformed" view of the role of schools. His level of schooling has become a reason for their unfitness for interacting with schools. Patricia continued later to discuss with the implications of this family problem:

> Patricia: So, you know, that's part of my life story. My husband, you know, he helps, but not as much as I would want him to. . .
>
> Ingrid: Does that mean you're taking on most of the burden or the responsibility?
>
> Patricia: Yeah, having to work, reminding Laura to do her times tables, and my mom is sick...so, you know, I try to do as much as I can. I wish I could do more. And sometimes I get lazy because I'm so tired.

Although Patricia clearly is very interested and active in her family, seems to run all things at home, and works full time outside the home, her words contradict all these actions re-convincing herself that she's the "lazy and unproductive" person she's been led to believe she is (Freire 1970, 45). Patricia reinforces for herself that what she's doing is not enough and that what she sees as her families' "deficiencies" are partly to blame for her lack of communication and interaction with schools. What stands out is how Patricia doesn't acknowledge how the teachers and schools perpetuate her socialization to believe that she is unfit to choose materials to assist her child when teachers respond quickly to handing out the very list she asks for.

An additional example of how my participants' revealed internalized messages of inferiority arose in my conversations with Veronica. Drawing reference to the mission statement in the school's parent handbook, Veronica shared with me a story revealing the frustration and hurt she felt about a cafeteria employee rudely disregarding the school's

published goal of "global understandings" and value for difference: "The environment at Meadows School will be secure, caring, enjoyable, and allow for creativity" (Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary Parent Handbook 1998-1999, 2). In Veronica's eyes the tone of the school's philosophy was set in these published "rules."

> *En la escuela los dan los libros ¿verdad? Donde están los "rules" de la escuela...y [se dice] no hay descriminación...Pero mi hijo se sentío muy triste porque la señorita de lonche de la que pagan...le dijo...que era pobre.*
>
> [At school they give out the books, right? Where the school's rules are...and [it says] there will be no discrimination...But my son felt very sad because the lunch lady that they pay...said...that he was poor.]

Veronica recounted feeling saddened and hurt by her son being treated insensitively over not having money to pay for lunch one day. She explained to me that she usually gives her son ten dollars to put towards his lunch bill for a week or so, but doesn't know how long it lasts. At a moment when the money had run out, Veronica's son came home reporting that the woman in the cafeteria said, *"Yo sé que tu eres pobre pero tienes que pagar."* [I know you're poor, but you still have to pay]. These words that stung her son were said out loud in front of everyone else in line revealing that he purchases the "reduced lunch."

In our continued conversation Veronica revealed her patterns of communication with the school as we discussed how she handled the situation.

> Veronica: *No es la culpa de mi hijo.*
>
> Ingrid: *Ay. ¿Y llamaron a la oficina?*
>
> Veronica: *No. Pero yo no la dí a mi hijo. Pues, no te preocupas. Yo voy a dar el dinero.*

Veronica: It's not my son's fault.

Ingrid: Aye. Did you call the office?

Veronica: No. But I didn't give it [the money] to him. Well, don't worry yourself. I am going to give him money.

Veronica feels this is a direct violation of the school's message of fostering a "caring" and supportive environment. Yet, although she is concerned enough to tell me about it, Veronica is quick to lay blame on herself for the incident and correct her "faults" rather than call the office to make a complaint and help to correct a disturbing hint of what she identified as discrimination.

Like Patricia, Veronica articulates clearly the issues that hurt her family and yet accepts all the blame for this "miscommunication" herself. Veronica's previous experiences and beliefs surfaced as interfering with the potential motivation to bring this to some one's attention. Veronica is upset by this incident, but ensures me that I needn't worry since *she'll* make sure she doesn't forget anymore. Veronica's reaction to this incident emphasizes her belief that it was really through her own deficiency that the issue arose. Holding these contradictory actions and feelings at one moment exemplifies the concept Freire calls the "duality of the oppressed." He says, the oppressed "...are contradictory, divided beings, shaped by and existing in a concrete situation of oppression and violence" (1970, 37). The oppressed are contradictorily at one moment aware of oppressive conditions and at the same time silenced and subdued by their internalization that somehow it is their fault.

The message from the school's parent handbook at this moment had become meaningless to Veronica when clearly the "Meadows Policy on School Climate..." *does*

not "guide the teachers and all adults as they work with students" (Eleanor Roosevelt Parent Handbook 1998-1999, 6). Feeling already timid about approaching a staff lacking fluency in Spanish, the inconsistency between written oaths and actions nourishes Veronica's previously internalized message of powerlessness.

In their response to what they thought would assist them towards working with and helping their children in their education, the colonization of the participants becomes clearer. Attempting to uncover the sorts of assistance the participants determined important to them, I asked them what ways they felt the school could help them achieve their goals. I inquired what sort of classes or activities would be useful to them?

Adriana said that she wanted after-school classes offered. At first she didn't have anything specific in mind, but stressed that "there's things you don't know that the school can teach you. When they teach you, you know you have the problem [and] you know you can solve it."

Adriana describes the potential "awakening" she might encounter as a result of learning a "truth" proclaimed by the teachers. Adriana sees the school and the faculty who potentially would offer classes as the "experts." Freire posits, "Submerged in reality, the oppressed cannot perceive clearly the "order" which serves the interests of the oppressors whose image they have internalized" (1970, 44). Submerged in her colonized reality, Adriana cannot see how schools and teachers mold and reinforce her thinking and how she has accepted this role of schools as necessary and helpful. Left unexamined by both the school and parents, the role of educating and assisting parents to achieve success remains the antidialogic colonizing of families into school-identified norms.

Continuing to explore what role the school could play in assisting her towards family goals Adriana began to formulate ideas for specific kinds of classes she would find helpful. She said,

> I wish they could have like a class and teach you how to talk to your children...like ... communication, how to communicate. Because sometimes parents don't know how to talk to their children. Sometimes they scream ...[at] them instead of talk and sometimes they don't use the appropriate words for it or the way you communicate is not the right way.

Adriana reveals her acceptance of the school and teachers' superior manner of communication and is certain that school staff would teach her this "legitimate" communication style. Adriana's words reveal her acceptance of banking style education where teachers and schools deposit the "truths" and important knowledge in parents. As Freire says, this depositing style education "treats students as objects of assistance... Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates" (1970, 64). The learning Adriana describes potentially would domesticate or socialize her to embrace "norms" and understandings created by the schools. Adriana's belief that teachers have been "appropriately" educated and hold the answers to what "is" unveils more her previous colonized status.

The colonized internalization of inability and laziness that Veronica, Patricia, and Adriana expressed becomes especially consequential as it perpetuates the inequitable power roles between families and schools. As a socializing agent and having been socialized myself to uncritically support this imbalance functioning through antidialogic actions operating on each of us, the teacher (myself) can easily perpetuate the participants' depreciated view of themselves.

Recognizing feelings of uncertainty and lack of worth in parents become a cue for a teacher to offer her "expert" advice, opinions and interpretations. It is in this moment of depositing knowledge, I as a teacher, unconsciously maintain my invading, colonizing role reaffirming these parents' "knowledge" that they are unfit to determine the best action or decide what is an important issue. Moreover, this invasive action removes any possibility for parents to develop their own *"conscientização"*–an awareness of their situation in the world (Freire 1970).

Maintaining Cultural Invasion: Manipulation through Decree

A point to emphasize in Veronica's story about the cafeteria employee is how I immediately react to her story, telling her the appropriate action to take. *"Es importante a llamar a la oficina y diga a la principal que está ocurriendo."* [It is important to call the office and tell the principal that this is happening]. Assisting her and naming *for* Veronica what is considered important to do or how to take action in this matter becomes an act of invasion. My seemingly helpful words are reminiscent of the method Freire explains that molds parents' thoughts and beliefs so that they begin to reflect the values, the standards, and the goals of the invading group (1970, 134).

Freire says,

> One who is doing the decreeing defines himself and the class...The words of his own class come to be the "true" words which he imposes or attempts to impose on others... (1970, 115).

Regardless of my intentions, my act of decreeing the appropriate action and response to Veronica's issue with the cafeteria still results in preserving the social structure where teachers dictate and parents listen and act on it. This is what Freire says invades the

consciousness of this parent, removing the opportunity and privilege to create for herself what is "right." My act of filling her mind with *my* interpretation of how to deal with the world acts to silence Veronica as I mold her thoughts. This is particularly damaging since it is in repeated "filling" or "banking" style interaction that inhibits a person's potential for creating an understanding of their world (Freire 1970, 64).

I became aware of my act of depositing of truths and deeming what is important to my participants as I reviewed and transcribed our first interviews. Reflecting on this with Patricia I reveal my concern in a second conversation:

> I have taken a role that I didn't expect in this which is shocking to me and that is, even though I'm really interested in partnership, I still read my words and said, I'm still explaining the world ... as if you're not capable of knowing or that maybe you didn't know or I assume something. I don't know.

In examining my own language use in conversations with my research participants, I was initially surprised to see elements of what Freire refers to as remnants of the oppressor role. According to Freire,

> Certain members of the oppressor class join the oppressed in their struggles for liberation, thus moving from one pole of the contradiction to the other. Theirs is a fundamental role. . . It happens, however, that as they cease to be exploiters or indifferent spectators or simply the heirs of exploitation and move to the side of the exploited, they almost always bring with them the marks of their origin: their prejudices and their deformations, which include a lack of confidence in the people's ability to think, to want, and to know. (Freire 1970, 42)

My interaction style and beliefs about parents' willingness or capability to partner with me have been influenced by the same socializing societal norms and educational system I now teach in. I have clearly, deliberately, consciously chosen to partner with families of my students in order to assist children in finding success and meaning in school. Despite

my clear intention and active attempts to transform typical parent-teacher experiences I found myself naming *for* participants what are important issues and how to handle them and it was in reflecting on the text between myself and the participants that revealed what manipulating, antidialogic forms of communication I still unconsciously use. The discomfort in this finding arose from the ease to which antidialogic action appears in conversation.

Parent-Teacher Conferences Engendering Cultural Invasion

Of the many structural barriers in schools that promote the cultural invasion of parents, parent-teacher conferences hold the potential to engender manipulation and the cultural invasion of the parents' realities *and* the stimulation of critical consciousness leading to empowerment. The data suggests parent-teacher conferences were the primary forum for my participants' communication experience with teachers, limited to scheduled meetings during parent-teacher conference week.

To stimulate some discussion about how the participants have been manipulated by teachers, I posed various situations to suggest what I thought inhibited parent-teacher interactions. I described an example, for instance, of how a teacher using professional jargon or educational terminology in conversations halts the conversation reducing the other person's level of comprehension and avenues for participation. In response, Adriana shared an experience being silenced by a teacher using "fancy words." She said,

> There's one teacher . . . she used to talk to me like that and I go [thought], what is she talking about? Every parent conference I came and I go [thought], her education is too high because I can't understand what she said. And maybe if she said it in Spanish . . . maybe I could

> understand. But in English I don't know those words . . . Every time I come to a conference . . . I feel so embarrassed because I didn't understand what she said.

Adriana shares feeling intimidated by her lack of English fluency and by the teacher's use of incomprehensible vocabulary or technical jargon that excluded Adriana from the conversation. Exclusionary language is antidialogic. It prevented Adriana from being able to understand the teacher in the conversation and silences Adriana as she is not "let into" the conversation. This form of communication cannot be considered dialogue–the exchange of ideas between two persons.

Freire describes this very type of interaction where a teacher or politician's language is not attuned to the situation of the other participant in the conversation. He says, "often, educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address. Accordingly, their talk is just alienated and alienating rhetoric" (1970, 77). Freire's example of language use between a person in an "authoritative" position and a parent, for example, highlights how not entering a conversation with the participants' comprehension in mind ultimately gains nothing and acts antidialogically to silence parents in the interaction. Continued communications that alienate the other participant(s) will serve to not only silence parents' voices, but also to discourage further physical contact between teachers and families.

Adriana's experience with this teacher not only highlights how opportunities for potential dialogic relationship-building fail, but also reinforces her current colonized status. Reflecting on the teacher's use of language that excluded her from participating in

the conversation, Adriana recalls not understanding and reveals how this interaction stirs feelings of inferiority. We discussed her response to such an interaction:

> Adriana: Every time I talked to her she used, you know, fancy words and I cannot understand what she said. And I tried to.
>
> Ingrid: What stopped you? What made it hard for you to ask her?
>
> Adriana: I feel a little bit shy . . . I don't know.

These continued patterns of silencing Adriana's desire or comfort with speaking *with* the teacher have resulted in what she calls "shyness." Adriana's shyness and her resistance to name what is impeding her comfort to engage in this conversation suggests the strength of her socialized acceptance of passivity. It may also reflect the intensification of a paternalistic cultural experience through continued paternalistic communicative interactions with teachers. Parents who experience repeated antidialogic interactions with teachers and schools, become socialized, guided towards obediently accepting what is prescribed for them and the outcome is, as Freire says, that "those who are invaded, whatever their level, rarely go beyond the models which the invaders prescribe for them (1970, 162).

It is crucial to recognize the debilitating effects of conversational experiences when the participants in a conversation are not aware of these antidialogic actions. This parent cannot move beyond her experience to realize that the antidialogical action of incomprehensible vocabulary really reflects the teacher's lack of awareness of her own level of comprehensibility. As a result of already being colonized about her place in the power structure among teachers and parents, Adriana may feel that it is her problem to

contend with rather than a dual responsibility between parents and teachers to critically examine the role of "teacher talk."

The effects of well-intentioned teachers as socializing agents ultimately undermine what is thought of as teachers *helping* parents to get connected with *their* children's education. The danger of what Freire labels "assistencialism" is the extent to which the teacher's assistance imposes silence and passivity that denies the conditions to foster critical consciousness (1970, 15). Through continued antidialogic interactions, whether consciously deliberate or passively perpetuating their own socialized imbeddedness, parents will not know how or think themselves fit for participating *with* schools in educating their children. All the invitations to help or work with teachers, or words of welcome are contradicted on a fundamental level. The antidialogic nature of typical home-school communication will ultimately fail to encourage and initiate parent partnerships with teachers and schools.

Antidialogic Structure: Policy Invading and Silencing Parents' Life-worlds

Even in my first attempts to contact Veronica and Julian, the structures of our phone system interfered with establishing communication. In our very first conversation by phone beginning to think about his experiences with the school, Julian expressed frustration with not being able to directly call his son's teacher. He had tried for days to respond to a message from me and found himself caught up in the "rules" for speaking with teachers at Eleanor Roosevelt Elementary School. All calls to the school are screened by the office and determined important or not by one of the secretaries.

In later dialogue with Veronica and Julian at their home, I opened our dialogue

with and repeatedly referred back to my question of what things about schools or teachers impeded the participants' ability or sense of comfort in working or communicating with the school. In our second meeting, our conversations grew richer as Veronica and Julian began to frankly identify how school policies contribute to the lack of communication between teachers and schools as they have experienced it. Julian talked further about how these rules interfered with home-school communication.

Referring to an incident with me, Julian recalled receiving notices of excessive tardies from the office for his son. In what I thought was "simply" following the schools' rules, I sent Julian's son to the office for being late several times. As a staff we had addressed this issue and decided there was a need to notify parents about and stop the frequent tardies since it was interrupting the school's new reading program that would start promptly at the beginning of the morning. The school's policy was to round up and send all late children to the office immediately after the bell rang to emphasize the importance of being on time and curb their behavior to fit the school's expectations.

The antidialogic characteristic that applies here is how the importance of time and extending reading instruction has been decreed without discussion and making explicit the school and staff's reasons for implementing a new schedule and "rule." Since the Julian hasn't even felt adequately informed of this change in school policy and tardy policy is being enforced without any possibility for discussion and parents coming to understand this new goal, these interactions have resulted in imposing a standard of behavior on the part of the parents as well as the students.

Also, since the action suggested did not first include conversations with parents

and their child's teacher, Julian did not even feel that anyone wanted to hear his side of the story. And, he admitted to me, this experience reinforced how hard he feels it is to come tell me "face to face" for fear I might defend the policy and not even listen to him.

In our conversation, Julian explained these tardies happened because he didn't realize that we had also changed the school's starting time from the previous year. Explaining his frustration with the lack of opportunity to set things straight before receiving threatening letters of deficient responsibility, Julian exclaimed,

> *En México...todas las problemas acerca de tu hijo se retraban con la maestra. Y en la oficina el director se encargaba más de dirigir a los maestros pero no la oficina no se encargaba tanto de hablar de los padres. Y aquí con los maestros nada más platicar en "parents conferences" acerca de tu hijo...No hay forma de comunicación. No hay mucha comunicación.*
>
> [In Mexico...all the problems about your children are handled with the teacher. And in the office the principal is in charge of more than directing the teachers but the office is not in charge of talking with parents. And here the teachers only chat about your child in parent-teacher conferences. It is not a form of communication. There isn't much communication.]

The school's policy of passing out tardy notices to all students regardless of the situation or amount of time late, attempts to manipulate through an enforced standard what is "appropriate" behavior. Systematic, unfailing delivery of tardy slips serves to mold students and parents to be on time or in consequence "deal with" the office. This incident exemplifies how Freire claims schools manipulate parents to conform to their objectives and re-emphasizes the lack of opportunities for dialogic relations (1970, 128).

Reflecting on how teacher attitudes have changed since their children started school at Meadows, Veronica and Julian shared other stories where developing and

enforcing rules seemed to have become the school's focus. Julian noted,

> Like when you just go there to drop your kid off, you know, [the teachers say] don't park over here and don't do that. And so the parents are feeling when you get out of the car . . . they don't take time to say hi. They take time only to tell you, don't run! Don't do this! Don't do that!

As we discussed this further Julian began to describe the underlying reasons he believed the school's attitude has changed. He concluded,

> *Ultimamente, allí en esta escuela hay la filosofía . . .de que ustedes tienen, los "teachers" and los que están en la escuela tienen el poder para hacer los "rules." No sé si son sus propios "rules" o la "rules" de la escuela . . . Y eso es lo que siento; y eso está haciendo que también que uno se separe de la escuela.*
>
> [Ultimately, there in this school, there is the philosophy that you have, the teachers and everyone in the school, have the power to make the rules. I don't know if they are your own rules or the school's rules . . . And that is what I feel; and that is also making one separated from the school.]

Julian refers first to the implications of teachers and school staff holding the decision-making power and setting the tone of the school. He links his frustrating experiences with teachers and school staff that he shared in our conversations to this power to create rules and how this dynamic separates parents from the school. Julian recognizes the power structure that makes it as he explained, "hard to tell you face to face."

CHAPTER FIVE:

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS-REHUMANIZING RELATIONS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

> "That we are unconscious of most of our cultural knowledge...accounts for not being aware of the authority that culture has over us; thus we have the irony of people thinking that their "rationality"-based decisions reflect their individual autonomy when, in fact, they are under the authority of the language systems (discursive, spatial, body, etc.) of the culture that makes thought and communication possible" (C. A. Bowers 1987, 5).

> "We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their *situation* in the world. Educational political action which is not critically aware of this situation runs the risk either of "banking" or of preaching in the desert" (Freire 1970, 77).

> "Assistencialism offers no responsibility, no opportunity to make decisions, but only gestures and attitudes which encourage passivity" (Freire 1970, 16).

The degree to which teachers and schools partake in maintaining and initiating culturally invading socialization brings me to a conclusion that teachers and schools must have opportunities to awaken the consciousness of the teachers and school personnel to understand how day to day social interactions and communication acts socialize and reinforce us to think and behave in certain ways. Bowers' (1987) and Freire's (1970)

statements above support the data findings, calling attention to the unconscious level of understanding under which teachers and parents live their lives. That teachers remain ignorant of how language systems and communication acts in their own experiences have shaped their identities and beliefs reveals how unconsciously oppressive socialization automatically continues.

Freire (1970) describes how the view of the oppressed reflects the collective experiences of their situation over time. He continues in the above quote to stress that action to transform a person's situation only leads to "banking" education or the transmission of "truths" without critical awareness of the nature of cultural action. Freire also emphasizes how well intentioned assistencialism acts antidialogically to remove opportunities for people to receiving the assistance to claim their own responsibility and name their world subsequently encouraging the development of passive actors.

In light of the consequences the data unveiled and that Freire and Bowers speak about, teachers must become informed of their potential to silence parent voices and action in schools. Therefore, teacher preparation programs and professional growth opportunities must include opportunities for teachers to critically examine how and why they hold certain beliefs, what experiences have shaped their attitudes about the world, and how teachers might transform their own experiences in order to halt unconscious perpetuation of damaging socialization.

As an example, I offer a glimpse of my own graduate teacher credential program. The courses and design of my program offered me the forum to examine my assumptions about the role of teachers and the purpose of schooling. My professors designed *with* us

courses that included readings relevant to our questions about social injustices. I belonged to a cohort of about twenty-five students that developed dialogic relationships with each other engendering opportunities for the dialogue I described earlier in chapter two. Through our dialogue about our experiences that brought us to a graduate teacher credential program and readings about educational theory we grappled with perturbations that arose as radically different socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and gender experiences surfaced in our voices.

My teacher preparation program became the beginnings of a dialogic community where teachers "practiced" listening and re-evaluating their assumptions as we listened to varying opinions and experiences. Adding this dialogic and intellectual encounter to my way of being provided me a new cognition of interacting with others outside our group and further challenged my assumptions as I entered a school to begin working with parents and a school staff.

As teachers develop a level of critical consciousness we can make wiser decisions about how we socialize parents to be a part of their child's education. One suggestion I have for interrupting the culturally invading method of telling parents what we think is the best for children is to instead make explicit the methods and reasons teachers use to reach educational goals so they can become empowered. The explicitness of our intentions and beliefs removes the mystifying quality of pushing through personal goals by allowing discussion about it as they are no longer hidden.

Yet, as we make explicit our goals and beliefs we must remember as Freire says,

> One cannot expect positive results from an educational or political action program which fails to respect the particular view of the world held by people (Freire 1970, 76).

Thus, another dimension of interrupting an antidialogic cycle of communication must include initiating and fostering dialogue *with* the families in our schools. It is through dialogue we "name" our realities and begin to view from where we've developed a particular set of lenses. Teachers and schools must learn to listen and develop what Burbules calls "consensual authority." At one moment a teacher can gain a greater understanding of a family's context listening to their expertise and therefore ask the questions that can lead to co-developed goals and correspondingly stimulate awareness in families.

Much to my surprise, one area of dialogue Burbules (1993) refers to as instructional dialogue, surfaced as a potential invading interaction as instruction became telling without being asked. Because of the ease of this shift, along with Burbules, I caution teachers not to confuse or abuse the pedagogical element of dialogue as an opportunity to instruct families in ways of being or doing that *have not been requested.*

I found it equally as important not to force dialogue with reluctant participants for the "communication" that might ensue, a reluctant participant may not gain anything through the interaction. It may even distance that family further from contact and dialogic opportunities.

As I pursued one potential research participant, who cancelled appointments each time we arranged them, I began to realize the magnitude of the importance of developing

relationships with families and an environment that feels safe and comfortable to dialogue within.

Re-Conceptualizing Parent Teacher Conferences

The data revealed that parent-teacher conferences are the primary forum for teachers and families to communicate. Consequently, it is crucial to transform these conferences to support and foster more dialogic events. In particular, parent-teacher conferences need to engender relationship building and listening to the families' concerns and prior methods of working with their children. Burbules (1993) stresses that "listening is an important aspect of legitimate authority..." (33). Listening can encourage families to express their point of view that begins the process of critical consciousness development. Listening to families in communication events demonstrates value their expertise and knowledge. These changes alone should interrupt previous antidialogic action and socialize families to understand another role they can have in their lives.

Listening often may not, however, be sufficient for transforming learned patterns of home-school interactions. Teachers and school personnel may have to work to create an environment that fosters confidence and security enough for a silenced voice to begin to emerge.

Such an environment might include:

- An open drop-in visitation "policy" for any hours during the school day.
- Whole group or larger group family-teacher "meetings" to discuss what's going on in class and to provide an opportunity for parents to ask questions and interact with each other.
- A longer or more frequent parent-teacher conference times so as not to restrict communication with parents.

- Beginning the school year with "learning conversations" rather than reporting academic status and identifying skills to change from the beginning "typical" home-school communication standards.
- A phone system that provides direct access to a teacher's rooms
- A school focus on greeting and acknowledging families who come to schools rather than directing and enforcing rules.

The structure and environment of a school itself needs to be taken into consideration in order to affect greater change towards a dialogic community. Teachers need to have the opportunities to dialogue among each other as well as with the families of the school. The praxis of dialogue in all aspects of a teacher's professional world would provide an opportunity for discovering differing experiences and viewpoints as she conversed about day to day issues and concerns about her practice. A dialogic community of teachers might foster greater understandings of issues in working with families where basic communication is problematic. As teachers name their practice and express themselves they are in the moment making explicit for themselves their philosophy and what the goals are behind such a practice. A dialogic praxis (reflection and action) is an important ingredient in transforming dialogue between families and schools.

In creating a spirit of collaboration among professionals, collaboration with families may become more comfortable and "normal" as we make significant the naming of our beliefs and goals for teaching an opportunity to grow and view the world differently.

EPILOGUE

The greatest transformation I've experienced as a result of this research has been in observing educational theory come to life in my teaching practice. I conducted this study as a first-year teacher attempting to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of second language or minority families have had in working with schools. As I dialogued with colleagues and family members of my fifth grade class, I began to observe the awakening of "critical consciousness" as a tangible experience in myself and in others as we shared our hopes, dreams, feelings, and experiences with each other. These interactions provided me a concrete experience with dialogue as my "distant teachers" define dialogue and its importance in true learning.

Reading my own words in transcribed interviews revealed for me my tacit or unconscious level of behavior as I undertook my role as a teacher. Partnership with families of students I teach, and with colleagues I teach with has taken a distinct shape because I grappled with my intentions and effectiveness as a teacher-student working towards fostering dialogic environments and relationships with others.

As I approached the final days of writing and sharing my work with my professors, colleagues and friends, I realized a new valued and perspective about this "research phase." I previously felt I was reaching closure to a major event, towards reaching a goal–a finality. Today, I see exciting possibilities for actualizing the conclusions of this research. I see open windows to further reflections and study of my

practice as a teacher. I yearn for further chapters in my life that may end with significant transformation that leads to the opening of another story.

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